

**A Critical Analysis of Marital Instability among Yoruba Christian Couples in
the North West of England**

By

Philip Bukola Oyewale

A DISSERTATION

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Declaration

I, Philip Oyewale, declare that this thesis is my original research and has not been submitted previously for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning. All published and unpublished works cited are duly referenced and acknowledged.

Philip Oyewale

Abstract

Marriage, as understood from the Christian, Nigerian Baptist Convention's, perspective, is a mutual relationship endorsed by holy matrimony between a consenting man and a woman. Similarly, within the Nigerian socio-cultural setting, particularly among the Yoruba, marriage is recognized and endorsed as sacred and accorded great priority. To the Yoruba, it signifies a crucial rite of passage, a transition to adulthood and immense responsibilities within the community. However, despite the sanctity and lofty views of marriage, a number of Diaspora Yoruba Christians couples living in the North West of England (NWE) are increasingly experiencing serious marital instability and conflict.

This thesis, therefore, critically examines Yoruba couples' understanding of marriage and how their various contacts with social realities in the NWE impact upon spousal relations. Particular attention is paid to cross-cultural factors, power structures among the Yoruba and social structures that promote Yoruba women's empowerment in the NWE. The study employs semi-structured qualitative interviews. It notes that: (1) Yoruba couples, having been married in a traditional way and setting are intensely confronted with social realities in the NWE which often calls for a renegotiation of marital relations. (2) Issues of spousal power relations, male dominance and hierarchy, financial /resources management, identity crisis/social status and gender-role reversal are crucial factors that currently affect the level of marriage satisfaction among Yoruba Christian couples.

However, in spite of the academic underpinnings of this work, the use of devotional language is justified given the religious commitment and background of the research

population. Against this backdrop, therefore, the relevance of the proposed marriage enhancement initiative, Prayer Intervention Programmes (PIP), as a viable approach for marital harmony, is significant.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Mrs Abigail Oyewale (my stepmother), the first prophet of my life; and Ruth Oyewale (my wife), who believe in my vision and stands with me.

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To God alone be all the glory

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Thesis

The idea for this thesis stemmed from my experience as a Nigerian Baptist minister with pastoral responsibilities for a community of fellow Nigerians in the North West of England (hereafter NWE). Most of the members of my congregation are, like me, of Yoruba ethnic origin. The interrelated strands of teaching from the Nigerian Baptist Convention and Yoruba cultural tradition would have instilled in them, as they did in me, a fundamental expectation of the permanence of marriage. Nevertheless, my pastoral experience indicated differently. Within this population of Yoruba Christians, marital instability is common and can easily develop into sustained conflict. Couples become estranged and, as embittered spouses, instigate court proceedings that sometimes lead to divorce with ‘a clean break’.

This thesis offers pastoral and academic responses as to why this is the case. It explores the immediate and remote causes of marital conflict and disaffection in the wake of these couples settling in the NWE. Since it is also intended to serve as a reference source for future pastoral work and ministry, the thesis employs a systematic and investigative approach in laying the ground for informed practical responses. The overarching aim, as discernible from the title, is to provide answers to three core questions:

1. What are the issues and challenges facing married Yoruba Christian couples consequent upon their arrival in NWE?
2. To what extent can these be said to have destabilized marriages, rendered separation inevitable or precipitated divorce?

3. Is it possible to formulate a pastoral response that would, at best, contain or, at worst, accommodate the adverse effects of marital conflict and breakdown without compromising the doctrinal stance of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on marriage?¹

Coming to grips with these questions necessitated my collection of data, a detailed analysis of that data, and the eventual articulation of a proposed pastoral model with a strong theological basis. The model is rooted in both the tradition of the church and my own analysis of lived experiences. The originality of the thesis lies both in the fieldwork findings and in the consequent proposal of a response to the issues engendered by them. In the first of this bipartite and original contribution to knowledge, discrete marital issues of a specified community are subjected to scrutiny and analysed; in the second, a marriage enhancement model designated as the Prayer Intervention Programme (PIP) is proposed and tailored to meet the needs of the community in question.

1.2 Research Methodology

As earlier indicated, this research employed a qualitative approach, using the semi-structured interview and participant observation activities as tools for data collection. The approach was considered appropriate because it permitted the study of subjects in their normal surroundings, trying to understand their own experiences, perceptions or feelings in relation to the required or accepted standards of society. This particular method of

¹ The Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) has significant doctrinal influence over the majority of the population sample used in this study. Most of the interviewees were Baptist from home. However, owing to their relocation to the NWE, some have moved to other denominations but with strong loyalty to the NBC. This type of relationship dynamics is further discussed in chapter eight.

researching samples is the hallmark of a qualitative approach, which is in direct contrast to the quantitative approach.² The latter focus on quantity in its collection and analysis of data and its approach to the relationship between theory and research is deductive.³

Thomas Murray observes that no society, whatever its size, is simple enough to be satisfactorily analysed in a one-off research project. An investigator has to select its relevant cultural aspects for the focus of study.⁴ Furthermore, Nigel Fielding avers that emphasis in ethnography should be on depth, context, and intensity,⁵ with data emerging as the result of reflexive academic rigour, supported by concrete evidence, rather than from the researcher's preconceived ideas. These scholars' views are complementary and I have, in accordance with them, carried out a comprehensive and systematic enquiry among married Yoruba Christians couples living in the NWE and the marital difficulties they experience after migrating to the United Kingdom. Hence, the thesis is not about Yoruba marriage or its cultural tradition per se. Rather, it is about the strife and conflict undergone by couples within this closely identified subject group.

The system of methods used in this study included that of reflexivity, which was manifested in three ways –namely, in the underlying presupposition I brought to the study; my background as a clergyman of Yoruba descent; and, in validating the academic substance of my findings. The entire issue of reflexivity will be discussed at

² Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 3.

³ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* London: Sage, 2008, pp. 2-5.

⁴ Thomas Murray, *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Theses and Dissertations*, p. 36.

⁵ Nigel Fielding, *Researching Social Life*, p. 267.

length in the second chapter. It is crucial that I elaborate on the first of the three ways identified above. This is in order to keep my presuppositions from burgeoning throughout the entire research process.

My initial assumptions as I began the work were, first, that Yoruba cultural orientation and values, especially in the area of marriage, are adequate of themselves to guarantee marital harmony among couples of Yoruba extraction; second, in a Christian marriage, the husband is accorded the responsibility of providing leadership and such leadership is demonstrated in both decision-making and the submission of the wife; and third, that intercultural contacts between Yoruba Christian couples and the social realities and structures in the NWE raise marital tension and identity crises. Whilst the fieldwork findings strongly accorded with the third of these presuppositions, both the first and (especially) the second were significantly challenged by what my respondents reported during interview.

Gender roles proved to be far more complex than I had originally understood, with Yoruba women demonstrating considerably more independence than the traditional prescriptions and expectations would suggest. This impacted on male identities and, in turn, on questions of power in marriage. The reversal of many power dynamics within the married relationships effectively subverted many of the elements of my first assumption, not least because Yoruba culture consistently places men above women. Any solution to the marital problems cannot, therefore, simply be a reinforcement of traditional Yoruba cultural norms and practices; any solution such as the PIP must at the same time respect not only the cultural and ethnic origins of its users but also the realities they encounter in the diaspora context.

1.3 Structure of the Study

This study is made up of eight chapters. This Introductory chapter presents a comprehensive overview to the study. It establishes the basis for originality and identifies its role in contributing to the burgeoning academic discourse on marriage and family enrichment, particularly among the diaspora community. In order to appreciate and understand the cultural context under which Yoruba marriages are contracted, a brief discussion of the Yoruba inhabiting the southwestern part of Nigeria, alongside their diaspora experiences, is presented. The chapter equally offers a preliminary presentation of the methodology employed and justifies the appropriateness of the qualitative fieldwork approach for the study.

The second chapter examines the qualitative fieldwork method used to generate data. The study utilized semi-structured interviews, participant observation and a strong emphasis on reflexivity as keys to gaining in-depth understanding and interpretation of the experiences of Yoruba couples. The research sought to interpret the actions and subjective experiences of Yoruba couples, at the same time gain insight into how they make sense of their experiences. The chapter notes that the question of validity and bias has remained contentious in qualitative studies. However, argues that these concerns were adequately navigated through the researchers' self-awareness and reflexivity.

Chapters three discusses the concept of power, not only because it emerged as a key theme from my ethnographical study, but also because it relates to the hierarchical structure of Yoruba societies. This chapter analyzes the dynamics of power within spousal relationships and draws its frame of reference from Yoruba traditional society

and what non-African academic scholars have written about it. Questions of power among the Yorubas have to do with a person's age, gender and status in the society. The non-African academic scholars, on the other hand, have some space for these issues, but they primarily base their arguments for egalitarianism on human right claims and rights of women enshrined in their constitutions.

The fourth chapter examines the literature on Yoruba marriage starting with initial negotiations for marriage and ending with its consummation. At first, on behalf of the prospective groom, an *alarinna* ('the go-between) approaches the prospective bride and asks for her opinion. As soon as the bride consents, the work of the *alarinna* ceases. At this stage, the family of the groom arrange for a special event known as *mo mi n moo* (declaration of marriage intent). At the meeting, they ask for an *idana* (engagement) and discuss *igbeyawo* (marriage ceremony). The parents of the bride can either agree or disagree to proceed further. Agreement lead to marriage and disagreement ends this inquiry. This pattern applies both to monogamous and polygamous marriages. Since all family members of both the husband and the wife are involved in a marriage, questions related to possible divorce become an issue of life and death. As a result, the process of decision-making and its outcome remain complex.

Given the substantial volume of data generated from the interviews, the data analysis was divided into two chapters, five and six. It is in Chapter five that an outline of the steps taken between data collection and the development of analytical procedures is provided – together with an overview of the thematic analytical approach adopted here. This approach is related to phenomenology in that it focuses on the lived-human

subjective experience. Emphasis was placed on the participants' feelings, perceptions and experiences as the key objects for analysis. The Chapter outlines in detail the development from the data of 78 sub-codes which were then grouped and organized into seven categories: gender role, power, cultural conflicts, social status, financial position, childcare issues and evangelical Christian teaching. This provided the frame on which the key, frequently inter-related concepts were developed to articulate the categories.⁶

After this initial overview of the analytical process, the focus of the rest of the sixth chapter is on the Yoruba diaspora family in its external context, that is the NWE. The Chapter identifies three factors from the data that considerably impact on the relationship between Yoruba couples, namely: cultural conflicts, social status and financial considerations. The chapter argues that intercultural contacts raise significant marital tension among Yoruba Christian couples.

Chapter six examines internal issues that emanated from the data. The focus is on how Yoruba couples negotiate the prevailing social realities in the host community as Christian couples alongside the resultant impact on their marriages. The data is categorized and subsequently discussed under four themes: marital power relation, gender role, evangelical Christian teaching⁷ and identity around childcare. Drawing on a similar approach to that used in the previous chapter, greater attention is given here to the participant voices while other information gathered during my participant observations of Yoruba marriages were equally analysed. This was helpful in

⁶Charlotte Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 1999, p. 197.

⁷The researcher is aware that there are at present about 44,000 denominations that claim to be Christians, hence the term 'evangelical Christians' is used due to the similarities that run through those with such identity and the composition of the participants interviewed.

ensuring that there were other complementary sources to verify information from participants, thereby producing more reliable findings. The chapter argues that gender role responsibilities, power relations between couples, social structures and orientations accentuate women's rights and independence along with the absence of an established socio-cultural hierarchy are some of the key issues precipitating marital instability.

Chapter seven draws together the findings of chapters five and six to offer a theological analysis of the findings. A case for the theological relevance was advanced against the backdrop that the study is largely designed to address a particular existential problem confronting a particular people of faith that have considerable loyalty to the Bible. The chapter identifies the synchronic hermeneutical approach as the framework to interpret relevant texts from the Bible that relate to the four key findings of the study. The chapter concludes that applying biblical principles to marital problems in such a way as to reflect God's plan for every person irrespective of cultural or gender prejudices largely rests on the sincerity and openness of Yoruba couples, particularly the men. Consequently, a marriage enrichment model, rooted in these principles was proposed.

The eighth chapter draws all the elements of the thesis together by considering possible pastoral responses to marital instability among the Yoruba Christian diaspora. It begins with an examination of a key biblical text that highlights the marriage and divorce debate. It engages the synchronic interpretative paradigm to interpret the text and highlights the relevance of pastoral interventions. The discussions equally offer adequate explanation on the Nigerian Baptist Convention's

position and several marriage-enrichment models. However, given their limitations and inability to address the unique experiences of Diaspora Yoruba couples, the need for a new model becomes inevitable. The Prayer Intervention Model was proposed as a viable option given its emphasis on the argument that the spiritual should always be privileged over the physical considerations.

The conclusion in chapter nine argues that given the cultural background of Yoruba couples living in the North West of England most of their marriages have become problematic because of their inability to strike a critical balance between their original roles in their home country and what is on ground in England. In other words, many Yoruba couples could best be described as being in a state of cultural dilemma or crisis. A number of other helpful recommendations, which drew on the suggestions of the interviewees, were equally advanced. The research identifies other related areas that calls for further investigation.

1.4 The Discussion of Marital Instability within Academic Discourse

There are different opinions in the socio-cultural, religious and philosophical spheres on the possibility of permanence in marriage.⁸ While marriage is seen as a universal human phenomenon, its expressions, and forms, vary from culture to culture, depending on a number of impinging factors.⁹ Writing from the evangelical Christian perspective, Olusupo Ayokunle¹⁰ supports the traditional view of marriage as sacred

⁸ John Piper *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2009, pp. 157 - 176.

⁹ George Reniers, Divorce and Remarriage in Malawi *Demographic Research* Sept., 2003, pp. 175 – 206. See also: Barbara Hutchins and Alice Clark are regarded as shining lights given their leading roles as nineteenth-century feminist scholars. Hutchin's *Women in Modern Industry* London: 1919, and Clark's *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* London: 1917 provide an in-depth account of women's efforts to write and rewrite their own history from a global perspective.

¹⁰ Olasupo Ayokunle *Building a Witnessing Family* Ibadan, Nigeria: Baptist Press Ltd., 2012, pp.53-68.

for life and as being between male and female. This, of course, is the position of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Although the argument strongly echoes the traditional view that marriage is sacred, for life and solely between male and female, it is pertinent to ask whether this stance reflects the experience of all members of diaspora Nigerian Baptist community –especially those living in the NWE –and more importantly, how far the experience of migration has impacted upon their marriages.¹¹

The term ‘marital instability’ may mean different things to different scholars. For Becker et al.,¹¹ it means ‘marital dissolution;’ for Conger et al.¹² it resonates ‘thoughts or actions related to divorce;’ while for Booth et al.¹³ it includes ‘the gamut of activities from thinking about and discussing divorce to actually filing for separation or divorce.’ All of these definitions are connected by their shared characteristics that divorce is common among couples experiencing marital instability. However, Ibeh Uka¹⁴ views the latter as a disagreement through which the parties involved identify recurring tension as well as the threats to their needs, interests, or concerns. His in-depth and more insightful definition regards marital instability, as a contest between couples with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals. Such struggles lead to a quest for control and power in decision-making. The last mentioned definition is closely linked with the interviewed participants’ understanding of marital instability. The participants conceived the term as being characterised by wife battering, usurpation of the husband’s authority, infidelity, domestic violence, nagging, unhealthy sexual life, poor couple communication and constant quarrelling.

¹¹Becker, S. Gary, Elisabeth M. Landes and Robert T. Michael ‘An Economic Analysis of Marital Instability’ *Journal of Political Economy* Vol. 85, No. 6, Dec. 1976, pp. 1141-1187.

¹²Conger, R. D; Elder Jr., G. H; Lorenz, F. O. et al. ‘Linking Economic Hardship to Marital Quality and Instability’ *Journal of Marriage and Family* Vol. 25, No. 3, Aug. 1990, pp. 643 - 656.

¹³Booth, Allan; David R. Johnson; Lynn White and John N. Edwards ‘Women, Outside Employment, and Marital Instability’ *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 90, No. 3, Nov. 1984, pp. 567 - 583.

¹⁴Ibeh Uka, Marital Disharmony: Causes and Resolution Strategies in Enugu State of Nigeria *Journal of Education and Practice* Vol. 4, No. 25, 2013

The major flaw identified in the literature on marital stability or harmony is the absence of empirical means to determine or measure the level of satisfaction that couples derive from each other.¹⁵ Marital instability, in the context of this study, conveys a more comprehensive connotation. It is not only employed to mean the lack of spousal satisfaction, often typified by marital unfaithfulness, physical and or emotional/psychological abuse. Over and above these, it encapsulates relationship and communication breakdown, which eventually may or may not lead to separation or divorce. Marital instability produces marriage-related stress, unhappiness in the home and irritability. Although George Reniers is right in stating that, within the African context, couples ‘forge ahead’ in spite of the instability that they go through,¹⁶ the extent to which such an assertion can be applied to Africans in diaspora is questionable.

This study argues that the absence of key elements of Yoruba culture has become the precursor of marital instability and relationship conflicts among Yoruba Christian couples. Put succinctly, the thrust of this study is that the inability of Yoruba couples to negotiate a proactive balance between their traditional/conservative Yoruba hierarchical orientations and the more liberating and independent English culture is hugely problematic, especially in marital relationships. Therefore, drawing from key relevant academic texts, semi-structured interviews conducted among a sample of thirty respondents, and participant observation, the study proposes a new Christian marriage-enrichment model, aimed at stabilizing marital relationships and satisfaction.

¹⁵ Thomas N. Bradbury, Frank G. Fincham and Steven R. Beach Research on the Nature and Determinant of Marital Satisfaction: A Decade in Review *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, November 2000, pp. 964-980 and Andrian B. Kelly and Frank G. Fincham ‘Marital Health: Towards a More Complete Account of Functional and Satisfying Couple’s Relationship’ School of Psychology, University of Wales Cardiff, United Kingdom, pp. 1-25.

¹⁶ George Reniers, Divorce and Remarriage in Malawi *Demographic Research* Sept., 2003, pp. 175–206.

To respond adequately to the key questions identified above, the thesis sets out to: (a) explore what may lie beneath the outward appearances of normality within many marriages; (b) examine the issues of socio-cultural changes, particularly of women's financial empowerment that lies beneath it; and (c) employ qualitative fieldwork as a means of examining how relocation to the NWE directly or indirectly leads to crises of identity among couples.

1.5 The Yoruba in Context

Whereas much work has been done on the Yoruba in diaspora,¹⁷ there is a dearth of research on the subject of instability in their marital lives.¹⁸ Consequently, it is important to survey the literature on this linguistic group, given their unique traditional orientation and migratory experiences. Since the turn of the 21st century, research has often suggested that the experiences of migrant people can be intriguing, complex, frustrating, challenging or a combination of these.¹⁹ A substantial body of literature²⁰ in this area indicates that the movement of people from a fixed location

¹⁷ Hermione Harris, Matt D. Childs and Toyin Falola have written extensively on Yoruba in Diaspora. See: Hermione Harris, *Yoruba in Diaspora: An African Church in London* (Contemporary Anthropology of Religion) Matt D. Childs and Toyin Falola, *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Blacks in the Diaspora).

¹⁸ For over a decade of my pastoral ministry in Liverpool, I have had the task of mediating in and settling marital feuds; and these have become increasingly disturbing in recent times. The same experience is familiar to other pastor colleagues of mine, particularly those with predominantly Yoruba membership. These experiences/developments are consistent with finding from a number of studies: T. G. Adegoke, 'Socio-cultural Factors as Determinants of Divorce Rate among Yoruba Women of Reproductive Age in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria' *Sturdt, Tribe Tribal Vol. 8, 2*, pp. 107-114; Okunola, M. I. *Separation and Divorce a Handbook for Nigerian Social Workers* Ibadan: Daybis Ltd, pp. 77-80; Isiugo-Abanihe Uche 'Stability of Marital Union and Fertility in Nigeria' *Journal of Biosocial Sciences* 30, 33 - 41, 1998.

¹⁹ Roza Tsagarousianou 'Rethinking the Concept of Diaspora: Mobility, Connectivity and Communication in a Globalized' *World Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* University of Westminster, London, Vol. 1(1): pp. 52- 56; N. Papastergiadis *The Turbulence of Migration* Cambridge: Polity, 2000, p. 60; Fazal, S. and R. Tsagarousianou 'Transnational Cultural Practices and Communicative Spaces' *Javnost/The Public* IX. No. 1, 2002, pp. 5 - 18.

²⁰ D. Morley *Home Territories: Media, Mobility, Identity*. London: Routledge, 2000; Roza Tsagarousianou 'A Space Where One Feels at Home': Media Consumption Practices among London's South Asian and Greek Cypriot Communities' in *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*, R. King and N. Wood (eds.), 158 - 172. London: Routledge, 2001.

(called homeland) to another place for the purpose of settlement has become a significant aspect of social change within contemporary societies. As Khachig Tololyan notes, various considerations inform the mobility and dispersion of a people:

... migration intended to acquire education, jobs, land, settlement, new citizenship, there are also mobile traders and itinerant labourers who circulate between homeland and extraterritorial opportunities; there are victims of mass deportations, refugees and asylum seekers – some choose mobility, others have it thrust upon them; some are uprooted, others uproot themselves. Some eventually return home, many are assimilated, and the remainder may become consolidated into Diaspora communities.²¹

Of course, migration is not limited to people of African descent.²² However, Africans have a unique drive for adventure in terms of relocating to foreign lands. According to the World Bank, the total diaspora from African nations in 2013 was estimated at 35.2 million.²³ The number of Nigerians within this migratory population is considerable. While commenting from the British point of view, De Hass says ‘Nigerians have been migrating to the UK since the colonial era principally for higher education but often staying on as highly skilled workers. Europe bound migration among Africans intensified following the economic decline and increasing political tensions of the 1980(s).’²⁴ Similarly, Adepoyu Aderanti notes that ‘as African demographic giants, Nigeria has become increasingly involved in international migration to Europe, the

²¹Khachig Tololyan ‘Diaspora Studies: Past, Present and Promise’ *International Migration Institute* 2012, No. 55, p. 5.

²²The migration of Asians that resulted in the peopling of the Americas about 40,000 years ago is a historical fact and well documented. Similarly, the biblical record of the scattering of the Jewish people is another case in hand (Ezekiel 33 KJV). Please see: Jeanne Batalova Asian Immigrants in the United States Migration Policy Institute *Spotlight* 24th May 2011.

²³ *World Bank Bulletin*, Washing D.C. 2012; The Pew Foundation ‘the great Migration’ www.pcah.us/post accessed 18th November 2014; Dillip Ratha, Sankek Moapatra et al., ‘Leveraging Migration for Africa: Remittance, Skills, Investment’ the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

²⁴De Hass, International Migration and National Development: Viewpoints and Policy Initiatives in Countries of Origin: the Case of Nigeria *Working Paper in Migration and Development Series Reports* No. 6, Internal Migration Institute 2006.

Gulf countries and South Africa.²⁵ The Yoruba of Nigeria significantly share in the history and experiences of migration within the Nigerian context. Hermione Harris opines that Yoruba families and couples form an integral part of a consolidated diaspora ethnic minority communities globally, particularly in Europe and America.²⁶

1.6 A Panoramic Historical Development of the Yoruba

The oldest carbon date relating to the Yoruba is around 9000 BC,²⁷ while the language is reported to have been spoken since 4000 years ago.²⁸ Several theories exist as to the origin of the Yoruba, partly because the language was unwritten for a long time. Information about them was handed down via oral tradition. Although the account of their origin is contentious the Yoruba are believed to have sprung from Lamurudu, one of the kings of Mecca (present-day Saudi Arabia).²⁹ The narrative asserts that Lamurudu had a son, Oduduwa, who is generally regarded as the ancestor of the Yoruba.³⁰ In its present demographic composition, the Yoruba people consist of several semi-autonomous ethnic groups that are located in southwestern Nigeria (including the Ekiti, Ijesa, Egbado, Oyo, and Ijebu) as well as part of Benin Republic

²⁵ Adepoju Aderanti 'Changing Configurations of Migration in Africa' Migration Information Source Feature September 1st 2004.

²⁶ Hermonia Harris *Yoruba in Diaspora: An African Church in London* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 23

²⁷ There are other alternative views on the carbon dating of the Yoruba; however, Samuel Johnson's position reflects the consensus among scholars: Samuel Johnson *The History of the Yorubas* Lagos: CSS Bookshops, 2009, p. 3 - 17.

²⁸ Historians and anthropologists who have academic research interests in the Yoruba nation have validated this historical information. Please see: Andrew Apter *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society* London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 117 – 161.

²⁹ Babasoji Olusanya, 'Who are the Yoruba'? <http://www.uga.edu/aflang/YORUBA/ODUDUWA.htm> Accessed on Monday 19th October 2010.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

and Togo.³¹ Descendants of the Yoruba people can also be found in parts of Americas and the Caribbean, particularly in Brazil and Cuba.³²

The word Yoruba is foreign in origin and its use relatively recent.³³ While some people argue that the Hausa people coined it in the 19th century to refer to the people of Oyo Kingdom,³⁴ others maintain that it is a construct of the colonialists and missionaries from Europe and North America.³⁵ However, in the words of Bode Omojola, although human occupation of the Yoruba territories in Nigeria dates back to the fourth century BC, the roots of Yoruba identity are located in the ninth century in the Kingdom of Ile Ife.³⁶ Oyeniyi, in consonance with Saburi Biobaku, notes that Yoruba, as a generic term, is laden with diverse meanings and connotations. It has been employed to describe a people, a geographical location, as well as the culture and language of a specific people group.³⁷ This people are bound together by a common progenitor, a common language, and a rich spirituality.³⁸ In view of the eclectic nature of the term Yoruba, in this study, it refers to a people – their language, religion, migration, culture and identity.

³¹ Bode Omojola, *Yoruba Music in the Twentieth Century: Identity Agency and Performance Practice* New York: University of Rochester Press, 2012, p. 2.

³² Liberty Marie Winne and Ira Jacknis (eds), *Yoruba Art and Culture* California: Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 2004, p.9.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 3.

³⁴ Oyo Kingdom emerged as the most powerful of all Yoruba kingdoms in the 17th and 18th centuries. Then, the King (Alafin of Oyo) wielded unassailable power and influence over the Yoruba. However, in contemporary times, because of political relevance and influence, the Ooni of Ife seem to have taken that role. Please see: Titilayo Olukole, *The Mysterious Ogunjokoro of the Old Oyo (Nigeria) and Its Tourism Potentials Nyame Akuma* No. 69, pp. 41-44 and Oguntomisin G. O. *Power Politics in Old Oyo Empire: Readings in Nigerian History and Culture, Essays in Memory of Prof. J. A. Atanda* Ibadan, Nigeria: Hope Publications, 2002, p. 25.

³⁵ Oyeniyi Bukola Adeyemi, *Dress and Identity in Yorubaland, 1880-1980* Univerisiteit Leiden PhD Dissertation 2012, p. 40.

³⁶ Bode Omojola, p. 12.

³⁷ Bukola Oyeniyi, PhD Thesis and Saburi Biobaku, *The Pattern of Yoruba History African South Yoruba Historical Research Scheme* Nigeria

³⁸ *Ibid*

1.6.1 Yoruba of South-western Nigeria

Although the people called the Yoruba can be found in many parts of the globe, their base is predominantly in the southwestern part of Nigeria. Odion-Akhaine asserts that the geographical, economic and demographic composition of Nigeria – the size and multi-ethnic nature – is significant.³⁹ Toyin Falola observes that:

Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa and one of the most well-known developing countries. It has a population of over one hundred million that continues to grow at an annual rate of 2.96 per cent. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with over 250 ethnic groups and languages, each having a number of distinguishing characteristics. (See map, Appendix 4)

The country has over 250 languages, with the three largest ethnic groups being the Hausa-Fulani, who occupy the north; the Igbo, who are predominant in the southeast; and the Yoruba, who are in the south-west.⁴⁰ For the purpose of geopolitical exigencies, the original post-independence structure expressed by the Northern, Western and Eastern Regions⁴¹ was further divided into six zones,⁴² namely: North-west, North-east, North Central, South-west, South-east and South-south. Since Nigeria's independence from Britain, the political climate has been characterized by violent conflict and intrigues between the different ethnic groups. Ibrahim Babangida, a former Nigerian Military President, argued that the outrageous and often violent political struggle for the 'national cake', that is, 'the quest for ethnic

³⁹ S. Odion-Akhaine (ed.), *Governance: Nigeria and the World Bank* Ikeja: CENCOD, p. 21, 2004.

⁴⁰ Mark O. Attah, 'The National Language Problem in Nigeria' *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 21: 3, 1987, pp. 393-401. Oluwoye S. Oyetade further details Nigeria's geo-political structure in 'Language Planning in a Multi-Ethnic State: The Majority/Minority Dichotomy in Nigeria' *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 12:1, 2003, pp. 105 – 117.

⁴¹ Olatunji A. Oyeshile 'Poverty and Democratic Governance in Africa' *Ogbomosho Journal of Theology* 4, (1), 2009, pp. 37 - 59.

⁴² Olufemi A. Akinola 'Living off the Future: Interpretative Notes on the Meaning and Social Significance of Poverty in Nigeria' *Ogbomosho Journal of Theology* 14, 2009, pp. 81-113

nationalism and prominence is rooted in the colonial formation and structure of Nigeria.⁴³

The Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria are situated to the west of the River Niger (below the confluence) and south of the western branch of the same river, having Dahomey on the west and the Bight of Benin on the south.⁴⁴ Within the present political composition of Nigeria, the Yoruba occupy 11 out of the 36 states, with an estimated population of 37 million.⁴⁵ The major Yoruba cities, such as Lagos, Ibadan, Ilorin, Abeokuta, Ile Ife, Akure, Ondo, Ijebu Ode, Oyo and Osogbo, are strong economic centres. Trading, unlike other professions –farming, fishing and various forms of handiwork – remains the profession of choice. Yoruba traders are well travelled; their activities extend throughout Nigeria and most parts of West Africa, particularly Ghana.⁴⁶ Although the political landscape of Yoruba land has shifted, Oyo town remains historic, as the traditional headquarters.⁴⁷

In terms of religion and religious change, African Traditional Religions that previously were dominant accommodate other faiths. Hence, adherents of traditional religions, Christianity and Islam inhabit the religious space amicably. Robin Horton offers an in-depth explanation on why so many Africans, over the past century, have turned to more monotheistic religions.⁴⁸ J. D. Y Peel observes that the conversion of

⁴³ Ibrahim Babangida, 'Ethnic Nationalities and Nigerian State,' Excerpts from a Lecture delivered at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Jos, December 2002, http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com/earticles/ethnic_nationalities_and_the_nig.htm, accessed 13th October 2012.

⁴⁴ Samuel Johnson *The History of the Yorubas* Lagos, Nigeria: CSS Bookshop, 2009, p. 135.

⁴⁵ Akinola 'Living off the Future: Interpretative Notes on the Meaning and Social Significance of Poverty in Nigeria' p.82.

⁴⁶ J. S. Eades, *Strangers and Traders: Yoruba Migrants, Market and the State in Northern Ghana* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 37- 46, 1993.

⁴⁷ J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000, p.8.

⁴⁸ Robin Horton, 'African Conversion' *Africa* 41, pp. 85- 108, 1971; this was subsequently followed by another double publication: 'On the Rationality of Conversion' *Africa* 45, pp. 219- 35, 370- 99, 1975

Africans depended on their movement from life in confined small-scale settings, symbolized by local or ancestral spirits, into a wider social environment, symbolized by the Supreme Being of the traditional belief.⁴⁹ Consequently, the highly articulated theological doctrines of the Supreme Being in Christianity and Islam become a fertile conversion ground and appealed to them. Such conception of conversion solely as the outcome of an encounter between two cultures or religions, as opposed to the effect of a cognitive and practical adjustment to changes in personal as well as social experience, is simplistic and grossly inadequate to explain the Yoruba people's experience of conversion.

The Yoruba are rich in culture, with a robust and articulate language, Yoruba, which inadvertently gave the entire ethnic group their identity.⁵⁰ The leadership structure of the Yoruba is patterned after a system of traditional monarchy; different nomenclatures, such as *Oba*, *Alafin*, and *Ooni*, are designated for the king, depending on the specific cultural antecedents and history associated with the group in question.⁵¹ A common trend among Yoruba traditional rulers is that their authority is seen as sovereign. This is demonstrated from the traditional cognomen through the title *Kabiyesi*, meaning 'nobody can question you whatever you do, you do it with impunity.'⁵² Also, the king is known as '*Oba Alase ekeji orisa*, 'that is 'second in command to the supreme Deity.'⁵³ Even though Yoruba kings are extremely authoritative and influential, a council of chiefs balances their powers.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Reuben O. Ikotun 'Surnames as Markers of Identity among the Yoruba Sub-ethnic Group Members' *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* Vol. 4, 2014, pp. 307— 316, p. 307.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 308.

⁵² Robert S. Smith *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* London: James Currey 1998, p. 91.

⁵³ Margaret Thompson Drawal *Yoruba Ritual: Performance, Play, Agency* Illinois: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 45.

⁵⁴ Ojo, G. Afolabi, *Yoruba Culture: A Geographical Analysis* London: University of London Press, 1967, p.16.

1.6.2 The Socioeconomic and Political Structure of the Yoruba

Yoruba society is quite enterprising and stratified into male/female, rich/poor, old/young, titled/untitled, and king/subject categories. In terms of economic activities, occupations such as craftwork, trading, fishing, farming, metalwork and fabrication are enthusiastically embraced. Since the post-colonial era, economic activities have metamorphosed into a more organized and structured outlook, reflecting the ideals of modern capitalism and creation of wealth.⁵⁵ As is common with capitalist societies, the unintended consequences of economic inequalities lack of access to resources and unemployment has continually plagued the developmental efforts of the people. For example, using the United Nations benchmark of one dollar per day, the level of poverty among the Yoruba is above average.⁵⁶ However, their conception of economic mobility sustains the idea that poor people can move out of poverty through their own personal efforts, and good fortune, along with the help or support of members of the extended family.⁵⁷

Economic empowerment is usually arranged in such a way that men are often the breadwinners, while women play complementary roles, with their primary responsibilities shaped around domestic chores and childcare. This view was clearly substantiated during the interview section by respondents two, three and four, respectively: ‘In the Yoruba traditional life, the woman is supposed to be home, food is ready when the father of the house come in, the father is the man of the house,’ ‘the home in Nigeria is basically the husband that dictates the tune; in Nigeria, the culture

⁵⁵ Werhana Patricia Hogue *Adam Smith and His Legacy for Modern Capitalism* New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 37.

⁵⁶ Stevina Evuleocha ‘Marketing the UN/OSCAL as a Macro-Finance Model to Nurture the Non-Oil Sector of the Nigerian Economy’ *International Journal of Business and Social Science* Vol. 2, No. 6, April 2011, pp. 7 – 15.

⁵⁷ Babalola J. B., Oni A., Atanda, A., Oyejola - Oshidi B. O. Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: Lessons from Socio-economic Thoughts of the Yoruba *International Social Science Journal* Vol. 60, pp. 197-198.

places men in charge naturally, hence they are the ones taking decisions.’ As noted by some social scientists, the contemporary paradigm shift within the Yoruba socioeconomic sphere has brought about considerable changes. In Nigeria today, many women are engaged in activities and jobs hitherto regarded as the exclusive preserve of men.⁵⁸

Social organization among the Yoruba is based on the patrilineal kingship system; each lineage has its own leader called *bale*.⁵⁹ The structure described by Osaro Edo, although referring to the African situation, is applicable to the Yoruba setting:

Africa before the colonial rule was a continent of numerous kingdoms and empires. Each of these kingdoms and empires had unique political institutions for governing the people. All said, whatever be the nature of political system in any African society, the king by whatever name he was called, was regarded as paramount and ruled with the support of a group of chiefs also called by different names among the different ethnic groups.⁶⁰

The above depiction is true not only of the past, but also of the present-day political structure in Yoruba traditional setting. It is largely hierarchical, tailored towards patriarchy and male dominance.⁶¹

The arguments about the role of women within the Yoruba political structure can be summarized into two positions. First, according to Salami, ‘the Ife kingdom enjoyed

⁵⁸ Onwubiko C. P. C. Empowerment of Nigerian Women towards National Development *Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction* Vol. 2, No. 1, July 2012, pp. 68 - 78; Agoawoike, A. *Women of Substance: Africa Today* London: Afromedia Publishers, 2000; Emezi, C. A. *Women in Nigeria Today* Owerri: Spring Field Publishers, 1998.

⁵⁹ The word ‘*bale*’ is a Yoruba term used to refer to the head of the family lineage as a result of being the oldest male member. Traditionally, the *bale* was the ultimate authority within the compound in matters of discipline, dispute settlement and the allocation of rooms, work and land. A woman cannot occupy this position because of the level of authority and ritual functions that are associated with it. Please see: J. S. Eades, *The Yoruba Today* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 45.

⁶⁰ Osaro Victor Edo African, Traditional Institutions and Government *Africa Culture and Development* S. Ademola Ajayi (ed.) Ibadan, Nigeria: Atlantis Books, 2005, pp. 78-85, p. 79.

⁶¹ Yinusa Kehinde Salami, The Democratic Structure of Yoruba Political/Cultural Heritage *The Journal Of Pan-African Studies* Vol. 1, No. 6, Dec. 2006, pp. 67-78.

some universal franchise where there was no serious discrimination against women with regard to the institution of Obaship and, in fact, it was once governed by a female Ooni (Oba), named Luwo Gbagida, during the 17th or 19th century.⁶² The other view, as espoused by Oyeronke Olajubu,⁶³ contradicts the former by insisting that Yoruba tradition precludes women from becoming king. However, there were instances where certain women were installed as regents in some towns in the southwest of Nigeria.⁶⁴ Both the accommodative and restrictive views, as represented, respectively, by Gbagida and Olajubu, have been subsumed by the present prevailing structure, which permits exclusively male Obaship.

Yoruba society is profoundly patriarchal and hierarchical. Therefore, one expects that the prerogative of family decision-making would be controlled, if not totally monopolized, by the males who are heads of the household. Just as the *Oba* exerts authority over his subjects, the man exercises absolute authority over his household, including his wife. It is a taboo for a woman to control or usurp the husband's authority. Hence, the traditional emblem of a good wife is *iyawo rere*, phrased because of her domesticated nature and submission to the husband. This cultural view of a good wife as submissive to her husband was further demonstrated during the fieldwork interviews.⁶⁵ According to respondent 2: 'in my own home, as a Yoruba woman, even though I have lived in England for thirty years, I still allow my husband to make decisions. I know that this is what is expected.' Similarly, respondent 1 stated that: 'as a Yoruba man, from where I'm coming, we believe that the Yoruba man is

⁶²Salami, *The Democratic Structure of Yoruba Political/Cultural Heritage* p. 71.

⁶³Olajubu, Oyeronke. *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*. New York: University of New York Press, 2003

⁶⁴ Oyeronke Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* p. 92.

⁶⁵The interviews revealed that women see their traditional expectation as wives to submit to (take instructions from) their husbands in every aspect of their lives. Accounts of the interviews are discussed in chapter four, but these excerpts are for the purpose of emphasis.

the head of the home, as Jesus Christ is the head of the church.’ Adrian Hastings asserts that the exercise of power within traditional setting is not merely based on consent or democratic underpinnings, but on traditional hierarchical structures.⁶⁶ The implications of the above are fully discussed in the chapters analyzing the data – Chapters four, five and six.

To further understand the possible implications of cultural relativism⁶⁷ in terms of spousal relationship, a discussion of traditional Yoruba marriage is essential. Although several studies can be found on marriages between Yoruba couples in Nigeria,⁶⁸ diaspora marriages,⁶⁹ racial comparisons between black and white couples⁷⁰ and marital satisfaction, there are limited systematic studies on the effect of cultural contacts on spousal well-being.

John Oyefara claims that marriage in a traditional African setting, with particular reference to the Yoruba, is between two social groups or families.⁷¹ It is seen as a necessary and compulsory aspect of life, symbolizing maturity and willingness to adhere to norms of tradition. He further observes that Nigeria’s demographic and health surveys revealed two principal forms of marriages: monogamy and polygamy,

⁶⁶ Adrian Hastings, *Church and Mission in Modern Africa* London: Burns and Oates, 1967, p. 132.

⁶⁷ The concept of cultural relativism in marriage is clearly captured by Abraham Kichawho who argues that acceptable norms and practices in one particular socio-context might be seen as offensive and forbidden in another. Please see: Abraham Kicha *Rescuing African Marriages in the Diaspora* Bloomington, Illinois: Westbow Press, 2012.

⁶⁸ Kolawole Azeez Oyediran, ‘Fertility Desires of Yoruba Couples of Southwestern Nigeria’, *Journal of Bio-Social Science* Vol. 38, Issue 5, September 2006, pp. 205-224 and Peter O. Ogunjuyigbe, ‘Spousal Communication: Changes in Partner Attitude and Contraceptive Use among the Yorubas of Southwest Nigeria’ *Social Science* Vol. 6, Issue 1, 2002, pp. 59-64.

⁶⁹ Keshodkar Akbar, Marriage as the Means to Preserve ‘Asian-Ness’: The Post-Revolutionary Experience of the Asians of Zanzibar *Journal of Asian and African Studies* Vol. 45, No. 2, 2010, pp. 226-240 and Abraham Kicha ‘Rescuing African Marriages in the Diaspora’ pp.64-76.

⁷⁰ Thomas N Bradbury, Frank G Fincham and Steven R. Beach, Research on the Nature and Determinant of Marital Satisfaction: A Decade in Review, pp. 964-980. Please see also: Adrian B. Kelly and Frank G Fincham, ‘Marital Health: Towards a More Complete Account of Functional and Satisfying Couple Relationships’ School of Psychology, University of Wales Cardiff, United Kingdom, pp. 1-25.

⁷¹ John Lekan Oyefara ‘Polygyny, Marital Stability and Fertility Patterns in Southwestern Nigeria’ *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences* 6, 1, 2008, pp. 1-10.

existing in all regions and among all socioeconomic groups in the country.⁷² It is equally vital to note that Yoruba marriage is basically between male and female, as same-sex marriage is forbidden.

In-depth discussion of marriage in the Yoruba traditional context is offered in chapter four. However, the literature suggests that diasporic people often find themselves entangled in cultural dilemmas, and this produces other forms of social conflicts, cultural relativism and inability to integrate with the host community. Secondly, despite the visible force of traditional Yoruba social and ethical values, new forms of contemporary social changes subtly continue to erode and compete for relevance in Yoruba land. Finally, as a social group, the Yoruba have a power structure that is stable and that power structure has vital implications for its functioning.

1.7 Original contribution Made by This Thesis

This thesis is the first systematic study of marital relationships among Yoruba immigrant families in North West England. Its originality consists in its exploration of tensions and internal conflicts among Yoruba Christian couples; original, too, is its consideration of the outcomes of divorce within this subject group. Finally, it proposes a Prayer Intervention Program as an appropriate response to the tensions and conflicts of spouses in this context.

Until I had undertaken the study, the existential troubles that married couples from Yoruba background were facing in North West England had not been explored in detail. The only existing systematic work on family matters within a diaspora community in North West England was Ouseph Thomas Puthussery's doctoral

⁷² *Ibid*, pp. 1- 10.

dissertation, entitled *Marriage and Migration: A Sociological Analysis*. Further in-depth discussion of his findings is offered in chapter four of this thesis.

The way and manner in which the thesis ethnographically engages with the sample population and thematically analyzed data defines its uniqueness as offering fresh insight into cultural and Diaspora studies as well as in marital enhancement. The findings bring to the surface a crucial existential issue that has not only diminished the quality of spousal relationships among Yoruba Christian couples but threatens the very fabric of marriage among Diaspora communities. That issue is, at heart, the unsustainability of traditional family structures and expectations by Yoruba couples in the NWE. Given that the socio-political structure within traditional Yoruba setting is hierarchical, male-centered and highly hegemonic, any change of such arrangement will most likely engender instability. The argument presented here favours a renegotiation of power relations as a template for an even redistribution of spousal power and offers to the broader diaspora couples a way forward.

The task of understanding ethnic minority communities and Diasporic people in a multicultural society such as Britain, in a globalized economic environment, warrants a pensive and exhaustive study. Against this background, this particular study contributes to a better understanding of the Yoruba diaspora, which of itself potentially can help to bridge ethnic differences by fostering an informed knowledge of another's culture. Finally, in the midst of burgeoning marriage enrichment programs, the study draws on the fieldwork analysis inform and propose a Prayer Intervention Program model (PIP). Further in-depth explication of this model is

presented in chapter eight while discussion of the methodology is offered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology employed in this study, and establishes the case for using an ethnographically informed, qualitative fieldwork method. It sets out the research background and research questions, and outlines the various methods used. Particular attention is placed on the role of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, the insider/outsider debate and reflexivity. The strengths and limitations of this method are examined by reference to the literature, drawing especially on the experiences of other researchers in related fields – most notably Supo Ayokunle, Ouseph Thomas Puthussery and Sheeba George, who conducted research among Christian diasporas in Liverpool and the United States of America.⁷³ The chapter is divided into three sections. The first considers the key questions of the study. The second section focuses on the question of reflexivity, confronting the researcher himself, his background and motivations. The theoretical framework and consideration of the ethnographic approach taken constitute the final section.

⁷³ The works of these scholars (Supo Ayokunle, Ouseph Thomas Puthussery and Sheeba George) are of immense significance to this research. Not only do they serve as my dialoging partners but also important is the similarity of context in terms of the methodology employed. In-depth engagement with their works was undertaken in the course of the research. Supo Ayokunle 'Elements Sustaining Public Worship among Diaspora African Christians in Liverpool since 1900' Doctoral Thesis submitted to University of Liverpool 2007; Ouseph Thomas Puthussery 'Marriage and Migration: A Social-Theological Analysis; A Study of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Community in Liverpool' Doctoral Thesis submitted to University of Liverpool 2010; Sheeba M. George *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration*. California: University of California Press, Ltd., 2005.

3.2 Research Questions

This study examines the phenomenon of marital instability associated with Yoruba Christian couples living in the NWE. It argues that the contacts between these couples and the social realities in the NWE can catalyse considerable challenges to their marriages; hence, the core question that the thesis addresses: why are Yoruba Christian marriages in the NWE problematic? In pursuing this key question, two sub-questions are crucial: What are the issues and challenges faced by Yoruba Christians couples that contribute to marital instability? And what might be the possible pastoral responses to marital instability? Given the religious context of both the researcher and the subjects, in responding to this question due cognisance was taken of the doctrinal stance of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

As noted in the introductory chapter, a qualitative approach was preferred in this study because it offers the flexibility to interact with the participants in their natural habitats and, thus, potentially to increase the validity of findings. Denzin and Lincoln note that qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right owing to its multifaceted application.⁷⁴ It is a complex research approach that moves beyond disciplines, fields and subject matters.

A number of definitions have been advanced for qualitative research. Bruce Berg views qualitative research as referring to the ‘meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things; it depends on words, images and descriptions.’⁷⁵ To Glesne and Peshkin, qualitative research ‘seeks to

⁷⁴ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* London: Sage Publications, 1998, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Bruce L. Berg *Qualitative Research Methods and Social Sciences* Edinburg: Pearson, 2007, p. 6.

make sense of personal stories and the ways in which they interact.⁷⁶ Uwe Flick and Ernst Von Kardorff posit that qualitative research claims to describe life-worlds from the inside out, from the point of view of the people who participate in it. It seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meanings, patterns and structural features.⁷⁷ Qualitative research provides a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people whom researchers observe and talk to or people represented by their personal stories.

The above implies, as David E. Gray avers, that qualitative research is a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena within their own specific contexts.⁷⁸ Commenting in the same vein, Denzin and Lincoln affirm that qualitative research is multi-method in focus, and adopts an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This method also involves the studied use and collection of varied empirical materials; ‘case studies; personal experiences; introspective life stories; interviews; as well as observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in people’s lives.’⁷⁹

However, ‘qualitative research, as a set of interpretative practices, privileges no single method over any other. It has no theory or paradigm that one can ascribe solely to it, nor does it have a distinct set of methods that is entirely its own.’⁸⁰ Therefore, it has

⁷⁶Glesne C. and Peshkin A. *Becoming Qualitative Researchers* C. A: Sage Publications, 1992, pp.1-12.

⁷⁷Uwe Flick and Ernst Von Kardorff *A Companion to Qualitative Research* London: Sage Publications, 2004, p. 3.

⁷⁸David E. Gray *Doing Research in the Real World* London: Sage Publication Ltd, 2009, p.164.

⁷⁹ Denzin and Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* p. 3.

⁸⁰*Ibid*, p. 2.

been subjected to intense criticism and has been open to the accusation that the individual bias of researchers may make the findings or results less generalisable, reliable or authentic.⁸¹

Whilst addressing the plurality of approaches in qualitative research, Bruce Berg claims that some scholars associate the method with the single technique of participant observation. Other scholars, however, extend their understanding to include interviewing. Berg points to other research tools, such as observation of experimental natural settings, and photographic techniques; these techniques may include videotaping. The analysis of related historical documents, social drama and similar ethno-methodological experimentation, ethnographic research, and a number of ‘unobtrusive techniques’ constitute qualitative research.⁸² Flick extends this perspective by stating that qualitative research is not built upon a unified theory or methodological approach, and thus can adopt various theoretical stances and methods. These methods include the use of observation, interviews, questionnaires and analysis of documents.⁸³

In the light of the above, the researcher, during the interviews and the subsequent data analysis, actively participated in and identified with the thought patterns and perceptions of Yoruba Christian couples living in the NWE, in order to explore their family structure and the meanings they bring to their daily lives. Thus, consistent with Murray Thomas’ proposition that the qualitative research method involves a researcher describing kinds of characteristics of people and events without comparing

⁸¹ Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* New York: Allyn & Bacon, 2004, p. 21.

⁸² Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods and Social Sciences*, p. 4.

⁸³ Uwe Flick *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* 3rd Edition, London: Sage Publications, 2006, p. 16.

events in terms of measurements or amounts,⁸⁴ the researcher elicited in-depth responses from the participants within a non-threatening and non-intrusive environment.⁸⁵

2.4 Rationale for this Research Approach

The rationale for adopting a qualitative ethnographic fieldwork approach hinges on a number of considerations. As Michael Patton and other researchers have observed, the method offers a cogent template to study selected issues exhaustively.⁸⁶ In particular, Patton asserts that approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness and detail of qualitative enquiry. To enhance credibility, the categories of analysis ideally emerge from the data.⁸⁷ A survey or questionnaire approach would not adequately unearth the intricate nature of the marital issues under investigation. Morris Zelditch's assertion that interviewing participants is the most efficient and best method for gathering information about personal issues and statuses within a community⁸⁸ is another reason for choosing this approach.

Furthermore, Patton observes that qualitative enquiry makes it possible for a researcher to produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This is possible because the researcher himself or herself is the instrument of research and most of the work will depend upon his or her skill,

⁸⁴ R. Murray Thomas *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Theses and Dissertations* C. A: Sage Publication, 2003, p. 1.

⁸⁵ Denzin and Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, p. 5

⁸⁶ Michael Quinn Patton *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* London: Sage Publications, 1990, p. 14; Martyn Denscombe *The Good Research Guide* New York: Open University Press, 2003, p. 84 and John W. Criswell *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, pp.1-26.

⁸⁷ Michael Patton *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, p. 14.

⁸⁸ Morris Zelditch 'Some Methodological Problems of Field Studies' *The American Journal of Sociology* 67, 5, March 1992, pp. 566 - 576.

competence and rigour on the field.⁸⁹ This study draws on concepts based on this approach with regard to the various interview settings and the smaller sample size.

2.5 Ethnography and Its Relevance to this Study

Ethnographic research methods grew from the aim of anthropologists to provide a detailed and permanent account of the cultures and lives of small isolated tribes.⁹⁰ The term ethnography has been subjected to intense academic debate and has diverse meanings. Literally, the word means culture (from *ethnos*) and writing (from *graphy*).⁹¹ Martyn Descombe thus sees ethnography as a description of peoples or cultures.⁹² For Hammersley and Atkinson, ethnography is a particular method or set of methods which, in its most characteristic form, involves the ethnographer participating in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact, participating as well as collecting data on issues that are relevant to the study.⁹³ Based on the foregoing, ethnography is understood in this research as the descriptive study of a particular human society and the process of undertaking such a study.

The uniqueness of the ethnographic approach is that it offers the opportunity for the participants under investigation to narrate their stories via the data gathering methods adopted. The written report that usually follows is the ethnography of what is studied. Hammersley notes that the report of an ethnographic study is usually descriptive, taking a narrative rather than quantitative form.⁹⁴ Contemporary ethnography is based

⁸⁹ Patton, p. 15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 84.

⁹¹ Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, London: Continuum, 2011, p16.

⁹² Martyn Descombe *The Good Research Guide*, New York; Open University Press, 2003, p. 84.

⁹³ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson *Ethnography: Principles and Practice*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 1-22.

⁹⁴ Martyn Hammersley *Reading Ethnographic Research* London: Longman, 1998, pp.1-22, p.1

almost entirely on fieldwork and requires the complete immersion of the researcher in the culture and everyday life of the people who are being studied.⁹⁵ Some of the characteristics of ethnographic studies include a strong emphasis on the exploration of social phenomena rather than the testing of hypotheses, the tendency to work with unstructured data, the detailed investigation of a small case, and the analysis of data that entails interpretations of human activities, gathered through verbal narratives.⁹⁶ For example, in this study, the use of semi-structured interviews served as a lens to explore the marital experiences of Yoruba couples living in the NWE.

Morris Zelditch maintains that an ethnographic study employs three primary classes of fieldwork methods.⁹⁷ The first is participant observation, by which ‘the fieldworker directly observes and also participates, in the sense that he has durable social relations in.’⁹⁸ In the late 19th century, the use of participant observation as an ethnographic field method for the study of small, homogeneous cultures became widespread.⁹⁹ The second category is that of informant interviewing, which Zelditch considers as a component part of participant observation. The third method is that of enumerations and samples, such as surveys and questionnaires, which may entail minimal participation.¹⁰⁰ The first and second categories of Zelditch’s were applicable in this study.

⁹⁵ Murray R. Thomas *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Theses and Dissertations*, California: Corwin Press, 2003, p. 36.

⁹⁶ Atkinson and Hammersley *Ethnography and Participant Observation*, p. 248.

⁹⁷ Morris Zelditch, ‘Some Methodological Problems of Field Studies’, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 67, 5, March 1962, pp. 566-576.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 566- 576.

⁹⁹ Barbara Tedlock, ‘The Observation of Participation and the Emergence of Public Ethnography’ in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* Normal K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln. (Eds.) London: Sage Publications, 2005, p. 467.

¹⁰⁰ Zelditch, ‘Some Methodological Problems of Field Studies’, pp. 566 – 576.

2.5.1 Ethnography and the Researcher's Subjectivity

Given that 'objective observation is illogical',¹⁰¹ Murray R. Thomas cautions researchers not to expect ethnography to portray the absolute truth about a group or population sample.¹⁰² For Denzin and Lincoln, ethnography is a systematic investigation that produces descriptions and records about the ways of life of the writer and those written about.¹⁰³ Even though the researcher may think that they have simply recorded what really happened, their account 'is inevitably a rendition filtered through their particular mental magnifying glass, resulting in different versions of the same events as seen by different investigators.'¹⁰⁴

It is equally possible for the researcher to become too engrossed with the people being studied in such a way that objectivity becomes difficult, thus changing the natural setting and thereby compromising the quality of the data. Similarly, Julian O'Connell Davidson and Derek Layder contend that, in order to truly grasp the lived experience of people, one has to enter into a relationship with them and, hence, disturb the natural setting.¹⁰⁵ There is no point in trying to control what is an unavoidable consequence of becoming involved in people's lives in this way.

Thomas, however, goes a step farther than Davidson and Layder. For him, it is inevitable for the researcher to become get involved, because the consequence of not being thoroughly involved would be the presentation of an inaccurate picture of what life means to the people being studied. He identifies the major issue that could arise

¹⁰¹ Gilbert, *Researching Social Life*, p. 276.

¹⁰² Murray R. Thomas *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Theses and Dissertations*, p. 37.

¹⁰³ Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, p.7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Julian O'Connell Davidson and Derek Layden *Methods, Sex and Madness* London: Routledge, 1994, p. 33.

from this relationship as the problem of losing the objectivity of perception that the researcher intends to bring to the study.¹⁰⁶ Atkinson and Hammersley also recognise the danger of ‘ethnographic myths’ or of generalisations, most especially since the group to be studied may not always be ‘internally homogeneous’ or ‘democratically organized.’¹⁰⁷

I was conscious of my own subjective stance throughout the research, as shall be drawn out below. At the same time, I became increasingly aware of the risks posed to the findings by any recourse to overgeneralization: there were different marital experiences within the research population; no one voice or experience could be viewed as simply representative. This awareness equally shaped the breadth and depth of the study in terms of objectivity and reflexivity. I aimed to allow the participant’s voices to be privileged over mine.

However, there were obvious difficulties as well as challenges in carrying out this kind of research that had direct and personal bearing on the researcher. Here, my subjectivity came into focus. Given my pre-existing knowledge of the subject of research as well as personal experiences with the research population, the issues raised by the insider/outsider debate became critical.¹⁰⁸ By choosing to study the issue of marriage among Yoruba couples in the NWE, I recognized that I was researching

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁷ Atkinson and Hammersley *Ethnography and Participant Observation*, p. 253.

¹⁰⁸ The insider/outsider debate (problem) portrays a situation in which the researcher either finds her/himself directly or otherwise becoming part of the research population or is affected one way or another by the research process. Either way, there is need for rigorous academic discipline, objectivity and reflexivity by the researcher so as to avoid personal biases, prejudices and stereotypes from influencing the research outcome. Creswell presents further discussions on the insider/outsider problem. Please see: John W. Creswell *Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* London: Sage, 2009, pp. 176 - 179 and Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W., Silverman, S. *Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals* 5th ed., California: Thousand Oaks, 2007.

my own reality as an insider. This has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it enhances the richness of the report; on the other hand, the claim to objectivity becomes difficult.¹⁰⁹ There were obvious challenges for me as a result of my pastoral role and my being a Yoruba man; responding to them made it urgent that a reflexive sensitivity should be deployed.

2.5.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the awareness of ‘the fact that researchers are part of the social world they study.’¹¹⁰ Max Weber, an influential 19th-century sociologist, argued that researchers are influenced by their own value systems.¹¹¹ This insight is significant, because it is through the value system that researchers identify problems or issues to be studied in a particular environment. Similarly, Margaret Archer describes reflexivity as the process of becoming self-aware.¹¹² Therefore, it is necessary for researchers to make regular efforts to consider their own thoughts and actions in the light of different contexts. I tried to avoid being judgemental either by using my theological orientation to determine/undermine a couple’s sense of normality or by allowing my position of power, a Yoruba man and a minister, to intimidate participants, especially women.

David and Sutton assert that researchers ‘must seek to conduct research in such a way that it will not be rejected by others as simply the projection of the presumptions that

¹⁰⁹ Peter McGrail *First Communion: Ritual, Church and Popular Religious Identity* Aldershot England: Ashgate, 2007, p.89.

¹¹⁰ Kelth Punch *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* London: Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998, p. 171.

¹¹¹ Max Weber *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (Translators and eds.) New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1949, p. 11.

¹¹² M. S. Archer *Making Our Way Through The World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 67.

preceded the research.’¹¹³ Afe Adogame and Ezra Chitando, in their work on the participant observer, also maintain that a researcher needs to avoid becoming a ‘precipitant-observer’ for the sake of the credibility of the study.¹¹⁴ The relevance of this issue to the current study – and the challenges that demand a reflexive approach – will now be considered.

The overarching benefit of adopting an ethnographic approach in carrying out this study lies in its ability to explore people’s lifestyles, understanding and beliefs; it emphasizes the importance of understanding things from the point of view of those involved, rather than explaining things mainly from an outsider perspective.¹¹⁵ Therefore, to understand diaspora Yoruba Christian couples living in the NWE, it was imperative to be immersed in their ‘own world’; to understand their religio-cultural background as well as the socio-economic realities in the host community.

In addition, the ethnographer’s task is to become an accepted member of the group being studied, including participating in its cultural life and practices.¹¹⁶ As Scharen and Vigen observe, ‘ethnography does not stand wholly outside that which it explores; it itself and its narrative is also part of the enquiry.’¹¹⁷ Nigel Gilbert underscores the importance of seeing with the same lens as the people involved. He contends that one may not fully understand or appreciate a group or culture by observing it from afar (outsider).¹¹⁸ In other words, for a researcher to adequately

¹¹³ Matthew David and Carole Sutton, *Social Research: The Basics* London: Sage Publication, 2004, p. 17.

¹¹⁴ Afe Adogame and Ezra Chitando, ‘Moving Among those Moved by Spirit: Conducting Field Work with the New African Religious Diaspora’ *Fieldwork in Religion*, 2005, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 259-268.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 85.

¹¹⁶ Colin Robson *Real World Research* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, p. 186.

¹¹⁷ Scharen and Vigen *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, p. 16.

¹¹⁸ Nigel Gilbert *Researching Social Life* London: Sage, 2008, p. 269.

understand his/her subject of study, it is necessary to participate or be involved in the on-going, daily world of the people being studied. Gilberts further notes that:

Any group of persons, prisoners, primitive, pilots or patients develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable and normal once you get close to it, and a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to their daily life.¹¹⁹

Therefore, in Gilbert's view, to bring the distinctiveness of the people being studied to light, the researcher's participation should involve studying behaviour in its natural habitat as opposed to experimental settings.¹²⁰ This calls for the researcher to temporarily become part of the natural setting, learning the power dynamics, behaviour patterns and rules that govern each marriage relationship as it differs from one couple to the other. Consequently, drawing from Gilbert, Scharen and Vigen, in spite of the present researcher's background as a Yoruba man and minister (an insider), observing and participating in marriage ceremonies was helpful in offering more depth and breadth to the study.

This called for me to constantly self-critique my frame of reference, cultural biases, and the ethical issues that emerged from the fieldwork.¹²¹ This necessitated a reflexive attention to be in play throughout the research – from the initial engagement with participants to the final written report. Descombe contends that such transparency and openness strengthen the rigours of research and enable the researcher and reader to ascertain the validity of the study.¹²² Charlotte Hall Davies submits that reflexivity is the idea that a person's thoughts and ideas tend to be inherently biased. In other

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 269.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*.

¹²¹ Margaret S.Archer, *Making Our Way Through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*, p.76.

¹²² Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide* Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003, p. 88.

words, the values and thoughts of researchers often have a strong likelihood of being reflected in their work. The researcher's personal histories, discipline, socio-cultural circumstances as well as his or her relationship with the informants, are all reflected in the research result.¹²³

Yet, recognition of the need for in-depth reflexivity itself posed serious challenges to this research. The entire population sampled was Yoruba; we speak the same language and enjoy a significant level of mutuality, and have a strong community tie. In addition, I discovered that some of the female interviewees were sometimes reluctant to discuss their marital experiences because of their cultural backgrounds. I also became aware that some respondents experienced a sense of guilt or of not living up to Christian expectations if they disclosed the true picture of their marriage. With the understanding that these were factors that potentially could compromise the quality of the data, a reflexive approach was employed through an on-going and critical reflection upon my possible biases, assumptions and how these influenced all stages of the research process.

Reflexivity is vital; a researcher's claim to objectivity by arguing that their presuppositions are inconspicuous or invisible is not realistic. The focus should rather be on the need for the researcher to continually question presuppositions and preconceptions in order to promote rich insight and enable public scrutiny of the integrity of the research.¹²⁴ My background as a trained Baptist minister alongside my cultural orientations inadvertently created certain preconceived ideas and

¹²³ Charlotte Aull Davies *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* London: Taylor & Francis, 1999, p.6.

¹²⁴ Finlay, L. 'Outing the Researcher: The Provenance, Principles and Practice of Reflexivity' *Qualitative Health Research* 12, (4), 2004, p. 533.

presuppositions on marriage. For example, I personally hold strongly to views on the permanence of marriage, the headship of the husband as well as a non-collegial relationship between husband and wife. However, these assumptions were challenged. Hence, I ensured that my interpretations of data were underpinned by a reflexive attitude. In line with Davies' submission, personal biases cannot be avoided; thus, I sought to remain open and to exhibit academic honesty in order to integrate the findings into creative use.¹²⁵

Consequently, the following actions were taken. First, my initial assumption that Yoruba men will always be in charge of their wives was challenged; for example, how do I report information that differs from my expectations? Second, I constantly challenged and bracketed out my feelings, positions and preconceptions by allowing the views of the respondents to be given prominence. Also, the assurance was given that this research exercise is solely for academic purposes and not to castigate, judge or evaluate the level of their spiritual life. All these cohere with Archer's assertion that the researcher ought to continually critique impressions and hunches, locate meanings, and relate them to specific contexts and experiences.¹²⁶

2.6 Methods

2.6.1 Participant Observation

Douglas Davies traces the development of anthropology as a discipline from the late nineteenth century, when it concerned itself with the classical studies of human

¹²⁵*Ibid*, p. 8.

¹²⁶*Ibid*, p. 67.

evolution, to the twentieth century, when it witnessed a major change from evolutionism to functionalism.¹²⁷ During this period, as Davies submits:

Instead of a focus upon origins and evolutionary pathways, functionalists tried to understand how a contemporary society worked or functioned. Emphasis was placed on the institutions, like marriage, religion, politics and economics, which channelled the biological and social need of people. To collect data about such matters, anthropologists stopped depending on the reports of others and developed the method of participant observation.

Barbara Tedlock asserts that participant observation, as an ethnographic field method for the study of small, homogeneous cultures, is to analyse the concept.¹²⁸ This method is widely believed to produce documentary information. For example, in the course of this study, significant information was generated as a result of attending a number of Yoruba marriage ceremonies at Ibadan and Ogbomosho, in Oyo State, Nigeria.¹²⁹ Such interaction gives the observer an opportunity 'to understand how the group develops relationship and cultural constructions that tie it together.'¹³⁰

Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman describe participant observation as 'a conscious and systematic sharing to the point that circumstances allow in the life activities and interests of a particular group of persons.'¹³¹ The purpose is to obtain data about behaviour through direct contact such that specific situations in which the distortion that resorts from the researcher as an external agent becomes significantly reduced. Nick More notes that putting oneself in the place of those being studied and seeing

¹²⁷ Douglas Davies, *Studying Local Churches* London: SCM Press, 2005, p. 13.

¹²⁸ Barbara Tedlock 'The Observation of Participation and the Emergence of Public Ethnography' the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* London: Sage Publication, 2005, p. 467.

¹²⁹ As part of the fieldwork, the researcher purposely attended some marriage ceremonies in Nigeria during Spring 2012. Such exercise offered more detailed understanding about why certain actions are deemed necessary during marriages. Please see Appendix 6.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 551.

¹³¹ Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman *Small Town in Mass Society Class, Power and Religion in Rural Community* Illinois: Illinois University Press, p. 348.

things from their perspectives usually does this.¹³² Thus, participant observation was relevant not only because it enabled me to have quality time with the population sample, but also because it offered further insights into Yoruba tradition.

Moore identifies two levels of participant observation: overt and covert.¹³³ Overt participation suggests that the people observed know that they are being observed. In contrast, covert participation implies that the subjects of observation have no knowledge of such exercise. This study employed the former method of participant observation because it facilitated direct engagement with the study target. Vidich and Bensman contend that direct encounter with the group studied offers useful insights into the problem being researched and other peripheral matters.¹³⁴ Alongside participant observation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with couples in the comfort of their homes. They were aware of my intentions prior to the interviews. They were told of their rights to withdraw at any point of the interview if they were no longer comfortable. This procedure is discussed fully below in this chapter under ethical considerations.

Language is very vital in participant observation; it serves as the medium of communication and interaction. My ability to communicate in the language of the people under investigation was an advantage, consistent with Davies' supposition that the ability to understand a language helps to establish mutual rapport and provides the basis for appropriate interaction.¹³⁵

¹³²Nick Moore, *How to Do Research* London: Library Association Publishing Ltd, 1987, p. 14.

¹³³*Ibid*, p. 21.

¹³⁴Vidich and Bensman, p. 349.

¹³⁵*Ibid*, p. 88.

The Yoruba people are noted for speaking in proverbs, wise sayings and songs to enrich the meaning of their communicative expressions.¹³⁶ A number of respondents referred to these proverbs during the interviews. For example, Respondent 1 maintained throughout the interview that *Owu ti iya gbon lomo n ran* – (the attitudes of the mother are emulated by her offspring). I was able to understand his lines of thought and descriptions. In the instances where some unfamiliar proverbs were used, I sought clarification. Respondent 7 exemplifies one typical example of this when he averred that: *Ile t'obinrin tin se atoto arere, igi arere ni hu nibe* (Any family that allows the women to be vocal will see the abnormal growth of the Arere tree inside the house). I had no clue as to which tree is called *Arere* and seeking clarification helped my understanding. This is quite important, because Sandy Q. Qu and John Dumay opine that, despite the fact that the interviewer and the interviewee seem to be speaking the same language, their words may have different cultural meanings. Thus, one needs to seek clarification on what is being said in order for one not to mis-present or misrepresent the people under investigation.¹³⁷

Participant observation provides for an original association and involvement in the social world of the study group, which involves learning and speaking their language in some way.¹³⁸ During the interview, there were instances when some linguistic expressions seemed unfamiliar to me. I went back to the participant for clarification. For example, according to Respondent 10, 'coming to England has robbed me of my

¹³⁶ Tope Omoniyi and Joshua A. Fishman, *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion*, Amsterdam; John Benjamins Publishing Co, 2006, p. 112. The Yoruba have a saying to underscore the importance of their proverbs: *Owe lẹsin ọrọ, ọrọ lẹsin owe, bi ọrọ ba s'ọnu, owe la o fi wa* ('proverbs and words ride on each other; when one is lost, the other finds it').

¹³⁷ Sandy Q. Qu and John Dumay 'The Qualitative Research Interview' *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management* 8, 3, 2011, pp. 238 – 264.

¹³⁸ Bronislaw Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman *Designing Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. London: Sage Publication Inc, 1995, pp. 78 – 79.

manhood.’ This type of expression is ambiguous and thus confusing. When further clarification was sought, it became clear that the reference was not to sexuality but to masculinity and power. In other words, conscious efforts were made towards a comprehensive and integrated understanding of data,¹³⁹ aided by my knowledge of the Yoruba culture, literature and clarifications offered by participants themselves. I was not seen or treated like an outsider trying to get facts from Yoruba couples. This enhanced the credibility of the study.

Furthermore, it is important, when planning for observation, to consider carefully the kind of information that is anticipated: Is the focus of the inquiry to be on the content or process of an event? Are the observations to be based on the actions and activities of individuals or groups? What is the context of the events? These are some of the questions that any researcher involved in participant observation must be prepared to answer.¹⁴⁰ The first thing to do is to ensure that the researcher is clear about what it is that he or she is looking for. Once the process gets going, there will be many things to look at and to notice.¹⁴¹

2.6.2 Limitations of Participant Observation

If participant observation is what happens as one participates and observes a researched population, it raises the question of neutrality and objectivity.¹⁴² Many researchers recognize that there is no such thing as a neutral observer, as one will always come with one’s own preconceived ideas and this will, in turn, have an impact upon the group being studied.¹⁴³ An important part of this process is cultural

¹³⁹ Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Thesis: A Roadmap from Beginning to End* Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008, p. 96.

¹⁴⁰ Dianne, *Research Instruments*, p. 51.

¹⁴¹ Moore, *How to Do Research* p. 17.

¹⁴² Davies, *Studying Local Churches*, p. 20.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 23.

interpretation, described as the coming into contact of the researcher and the researched cultures, and their interpretations. ‘Although there will always be some dialogue between the different cultures, the culture of the researcher is usually the one that informs the interpretation.’¹⁴⁴

Wagner notes that the study of culture is itself a culture.¹⁴⁵ There is a mutual creativity in which culture is created through the cultures. Creativity and invention emerge as the salient qualities of culture. Wagner describes ‘the role of an anthropologist (researcher) as a “bridge” that mediates two cultures, not merely outsider to both but also inventor of both cultures through the activity of studying and interpreting.’¹⁴⁶ Davies and Wagner point out a major weakness in participant observation: the likelihood of a researcher’s cultural or intellectual orientations to feed into the interpretation process. Such possibility was avoided in this study by the researcher’s reflexivity and a conscious effort to give prominence to the respondents’ voices.

2.7 The Semi-structured Interview

Charlotte Aull Davies comments that ‘interviewing is probably the most widely used method of investigating the social world.’¹⁴⁷ An interview is a conversation between people in which the researcher often acts as the interviewer.¹⁴⁸ Sometimes, the researcher has at hand a set of written questions that are presented in a structured and

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 25.

¹⁴⁵ Wagner, Roy *The Invention of Culture* London: The University of Chicago Press Ltd., 1975, p. 16.

¹⁴⁶ Catherine Bell *Ritual Theory: Ritual Practice* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 52.

¹⁴⁷ Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography, a Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁸ David E. Gray, *Doing Research in the Real World* London: Sage Publication Ltd, 2009, p. 369.

methodical fashion: the structured interview.¹⁴⁹ The semi-structured interview is non-standardized and is often used in qualitative analysis. It has some pre-set questions but allows scope for open-ended answers.¹⁵⁰ The interviewer has the option to present the questions in structured, semi-structured or unstructured formats.¹⁵¹ In this study, semi-structured interviewing was adopted because it offers greater flexibility that enables the interview to be a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewees. It also differs from using a questionnaire because it offers more room for expression as well as protection of privacy. Questionnaire administration intrudes into the privacy of respondents.¹⁵² This intrusion could be ‘in terms of time taken to complete the instrument, the level of threat or sensitivity of the questionnaire or the possible invasion of privacy.’¹⁵³

Semi-structured interview allows the researcher to probe for more detailed responses when the respondent is asked to make further clarification.¹⁵⁴ ‘Interview is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understanding.’¹⁵⁵ In other words, the interviewee may not even have any idea of what had been stored in them until they are probed; consequently, the researcher facilitates active participation and more detailed responses from participants. For example, the core focus of my study is

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 369.

¹⁵⁰ Semi-structured interviews are designed to have a number of interviewer questions prepared in advance, but such prepared questions are designed to be sufficiently open that the subsequent questions of the interviewer cannot be planned in advance but must be improvised in a careful and theorized way. Since most of the interviewees’ responses cannot be predicted in advance, it becomes the interviewer’s responsibility to improvise probably half-and maybe 80% or more of his or her responses to what the interviewee say in reaction to his/her initial prepared question(s). Further explications are offered in Tom Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing* London: Sage Publication Ltd, 2004, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 369.

¹⁵² Louise Cohen and Lawrence Manion, Keith R. B. Morrison, *Research Method in Education* London: Routledge, 2007, p. 317.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 307.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 370.

¹⁵⁵ H. Arksey and P. Knight *Interviewing for Social Scientists* London: Sage Publication Ltd, 1999, p. 32.

replete with discussions of sensitive marital issues. During the interviews, some couples exhibited strong emotions because that was the first time that they had expressed such marital experiences. Such an atmosphere, to say the least, was very illuminating, informative and crucial in interpreting responses. In contrast, if they were asked to just fill in the answers, they might feel inhibited, or unable to express it with such zest.

It is important, when planning for an interview, to consider the information the interviewee might reasonably need to know, the venue of the interview, the recording of the interview, its subsequent documentation and analysis.¹⁵⁶ The interviewee must be properly informed on the area of research, either by telephone or by letter, with clear guidance on the anticipated length of the interview. If the interview is to be tape-recorded, then consent must be sought. The respondent must be advised of the potential audience of the research, and given assurances about anonymity and confidentiality. The setting should be carefully chosen, with minimum outside or distracting noise.¹⁵⁷

The respondents in this study were given the ethics form that explained to them the research procedures of Liverpool Hope University.¹⁵⁸ They were also assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. Most of the meetings were arranged on the phone, but the venues of the actual interviews were usually in the participants' homes; this proved helpful because they were in the comfort of their homes. Hinds aver that interviewees must be made to feel comfortable and appreciated for their time,

¹⁵⁶ Dianne Hinds *Research Instruments* London: Routledge Falmer, 2000, p. 48.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 48.

¹⁵⁸ Further research guidelines as approved by Liverpool Hope University are presented below in the section detailing the ethical considerations.

cooperation and assistance; the researcher ensured this and was able to generate significant data.¹⁵⁹

Another vital consideration during interviewing was documentation. I ensured that responses from participants were recorded as accurately as possible. Gray asserts that responses should be documented by note taking or possibly by tape-recording the interview.¹⁶⁰ I recorded the interviews with the full knowledge and consent of the interviewees; interestingly, none of them was frightened by this method. All the interviews conducted began informally by asking the interviewees to give some background about themselves: the length of their marriage in Nigeria, when they relocated to the United Kingdom, type of family background (monogamy or polygamy), type of job and church denomination in Nigeria and in the NWE.¹⁶¹ From there, I turned to other questions that I hoped would eventually lead to deeper discussions.

2.8 Data Collection Process

Qualitative research usually employs different approaches in collecting data. John Creswell identifies four main data collection procedures: observation, interview, documents and visual images.¹⁶² I relied mainly on semi-structured interviews as the primary tool of data collection. Structured interviews were not employed because they are usually ‘a one-off occurrence, and reduce the possibilities of a working

¹⁵⁹ Hinds, *Research Instruments*, p. 51.

¹⁶⁰ Gray, *Doing Research in the Real World*, p. 370.

¹⁶¹ A vast majority of Nigerian Yoruba Christians prefer to continue to worship in their mainline churches after relocation to the UK; but sometimes, these denominations are not yet represented in this part of the world and they are, therefore, compelled to worship in other churches that are congenial with their home churches in Nigeria.

¹⁶² John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1994, p. 149.

relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.’¹⁶³ The structured interview technique is more appropriate for conducting survey research with ‘a series of predetermined questions asked, often by interviewers other than the researcher, trained to use invariant wording and to standardize forms of clarification.’¹⁶⁴ Moreover, in most structured interviews, interviewees lack freedom, because they have to select from a set of responses provided by the interviewer.¹⁶⁵

Open-ended questions were used for the interviews because of the flexibility it offers.¹⁶⁶ I chose this method because it is akin to an open invitation for one to express one’s views on the subject under investigation. Cohen et al. contend that this approach is relevant because it helps to elicit in-depth responses from the participants.

According to them:

Where measurement is sought then a quantitative approach might be more suitable. Open-ended questions are useful if the possible answers are unknown or the questionnaire is exploratory, or if there are so many possible categories of response that a closed question would contain an extremely long list of options.¹⁶⁷

This method allowed my respondents to answer the questions as much as practicable. Although closed questions, dichotomous, multiple choice, constant sum and rating scales are easy to complete or straightforward to code for computer analysis, there are obvious limitation to them because respondents are unable to express themselves based on their real-life experiences.

In line with the above postulation, unstructured questions were directed to the participants. I went to the meeting with certain predetermined questions and, as the

¹⁶³ Davies, p. 95.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 95.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 95.

¹⁶⁶ Louise Cohen, Lawrence Manion, Keith R. B. Morrison *Research Method in Education* London: Routledge, 2007.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 321.

interview progressed, I raised other issues. The questions that were utilized for the interview were first piloted among five married people within the Yoruba community – to ascertain their relevance and scope, as well as people’s understanding of the questions employed. A content validity test was performed to ensure that the questions were comprehensive and that irrelevant ones were avoided.¹⁶⁸ Through this method, I ensured that the questions fully addressed the aims of the study. The following questions were aimed at exploring the marital experiences of the participants (Yoruba Christians couples in the NWE):

1. What is your understanding of marriage as a Yoruba Christian?
2. How would you compare your married life in the UK to that in Nigeria?
3. How do you make decisions in your home in Nigeria compared to the UK?
4. What are the challenges and opportunities as a married person in the UK?
5. What do you think are the causes of marital problems among Yoruba couples in the UK?
6. How do these issues and challenges affect your marital relationship?
7. Could you give some examples of strategies you use to address these marital challenges? How would you have addressed these challenges if you were in Nigeria?
8. What role does your Church’s teaching on marriage play in the face of these challenges?
9. In your opinion, what recommendations do you have to strengthen Yoruba marital relationships in the NWE?

¹⁶⁸ Clarke, R. D. *Evaluation Research* London: SAGE Publications Ltd., p. 49.

10. Finally, are there other issues you would like to say that have not been raised in the course of this interview?

The foregoing justifies the choice of open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Davies offers a further justification, by maintaining that unstructured/semi-structured interviews are best when combined with participant observation.¹⁶⁹

I interviewed 30 Yoruba Christian couples (out of an original 35) that relocated from Nigeria to the NWE; they had been married for over five years in Nigeria prior to their relocation.

John Creswell outlines a number of selection methods, such as purposive, random, systematic, stratified, convenience, and quota sampling.¹⁷⁰ The purposive or judgemental sampling technique – which relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the unit (sample) – was employed because of the cultural homogeneity¹⁷¹ of the interviewees. Some of the people interviewed were divorced; some were on the brink of divorce; while others had happy marital relationships. In spite of diverse denominational orientations/associations of the participants, common cultural trends define their worldviews as Yoruba. The meetings with the participants were arranged either through physical contact, telephone or email. The purposes of the meetings were well established, while the dates, times and venues for the

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.95.

¹⁷⁰ John W. Creswell *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* London: Sage Publication, 2003.

¹⁷¹ The relevance of homogeneous sampling, as a purposive sampling technique, is located in its aim to examine a sample whose units – people or cases – exhibit very similar traits, in this case Yoruba tradition. Moreover, the research question is specific to the characteristics of Yoruba couples, which makes homogeneous sampling relevant. Please see: John W. Creswell *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* London: Sage Publication, 2003.

interviews were mutually chosen. There was no rigid rule followed, as the circumstances of the couple or individual to be interviewed determined the approach that was taken. In some cases, I had to book for more sessions with the couples to clarify some issues raised in our earlier meetings.

2.9 Data Analysis and Synthesis

In ethnography, for any data collection to successfully achieve its purpose, it usually undergoes a number of stages, ‘from the initial formulation of basic ideas to the specification of the research design followed by the fieldwork, then the data processing and statistical analysis and to the writing of the final report.’¹⁷² The final analysis takes place once a considerable amount of data has been collected. In this study, the first step was a simultaneous process of developing a set of analytic categories that captured relevant aspects of the data and assigning particular items of data to these categories.¹⁷³

The next stage was to develop concepts that explained the categories before examining the relationship between the concepts.¹⁷⁴ Through these different concepts, the researcher was able to analyse and interpret the data. Thematic analysis was employed for the data. This method of analysis seeks to establish or identify any recurring pattern in a data. It is related to phenomenology,¹⁷⁵ by focusing on the human experience subjectively; emphasis was laid on the

¹⁷² J. N. Oppenheim *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement* London and New York: Continuum, 2001, p. 47.

¹⁷³ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* 3rd edn. London: Routledge, 2007, p. 161.

¹⁷⁴ Charlotte Davies, p. 197.

¹⁷⁵ Phenomenology is characterized by its quest to give voice to the ‘other’ as paramount in qualitative research. There are other methods that share a search for particular themes or patterns across data set, like grounded theory, thematic DA – thematic decomposition analysis, and IPA. Please see: Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, p. 93.

participants' opinions, perceptions and experiences as the key object of study.¹⁷⁶ In contrast to grounded theory, thematic analysis is a straightforward form of qualitative method, being flexible and laying little emphasis on detailed theoretical and technical knowledge.¹⁷⁷ It is in view of such characteristics that the qualitative approach is viewed as difficult in making systematic comparisons and that findings in it are more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies.¹⁷⁸

The ethnographic flavour of this study called for a mutual and trusting relationship between the interviewer and interviewees in order to facilitate reliable data.¹⁷⁹ In this particular research, participants responded enthusiastically. Out of the projected sample size of 35, 30 interviews were successfully completed; the remaining 5 were not available for interview.

My interviewees were accustomed to using the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible; therefore, all biblical quotations were taken from the NIV. A set was produced; hence, there arose the need to develop analytic categories that captured relevant aspects of the data and to assign particular items of data to these categories.¹⁸⁰

With regard to the coding process¹⁸¹, Graham Gibbs notes that anything can be coded within the context of a qualitative study.¹⁸² The key criteria that informed the specific categories was determined by the frequency of ideas, concepts, statements, symbols,

¹⁷⁶ Greg Guest, Kathleen M. MacQueen and Emily E. Namey *Applied Thematic Analysis*, London: Sage Publications, 2002, p.10.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.11.

¹⁷⁸ Martyn Denscombe *The Good Research Guide*, p. 94.

¹⁷⁹ J. N. Oppenheim *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement* London and New York: Continuum, 2001, p. 47.

¹⁸⁰ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3rd edn. London: Routledge, 2007, p. 161.

¹⁸¹ Braun, V. and Clarke, V. 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology' *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2006, pp. 77 - 101.

¹⁸² Graham Gibbs *Analyzing Qualitative Data* London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2007, pp. 47-8.

events and specific acts within the data. Bloomberg & Volpe advise that ‘efforts should be made to sift through and piece together threads and patterns within categories, compare connecting threads across categories, and compare with issues raised by the broader literature in the field.’¹⁸³

An initial coding process was undertaken, producing a total of 78 sub codes;¹⁸⁴ Words or ideas with similar connotations were accordingly grouped and organised into seven thematic categories, representing the social, cultural, economic and religious considerations. The categories were gender role, power, cultural conflicts, social status, financial position, childcare issues and Christian faith/teaching. These themes were employed as lenses to discuss and analyse the findings. Considerable prominence was given to participants’ voices, which enhanced the credibility of the study.

2.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in research have been a major concern for contemporary scholars. These concerns are against the backdrop that there have been unethical practices in the past, which blatantly exposed the confidentiality of respondents without their permission. Some others were biased in their judgements and/or interpretations of the data collected. Still others used deception on and exploited their respondents in the

¹⁸³ Linda Dale Bloomberg and Maria Volpe *Completing Your Dissertation: A Road Map from Beginning to End* London: Sage, 2008, p. 84.

¹⁸⁴ A comprehensive list of the codes that emerged is as follows: Annoyance; Christ likeness; Leadership; Counselling; Money; Time; Sex; Children; Live in the UK; Live in Nigeria; Help; Kids; Do Things Alone; Environment; Challenges; Relocation to England; Impacts; Strategies; Women as Victims; Yoruba Women; Supporting System; Planning; Prayer; Decision; Religion; Men ego; Control; Roles; Work; Growing Wings; Couple’s Background; Migration; Equal opportunity; Relocation; Divorce and Separation; Equal opportunity; Young girls; Male child; Female Child; Yoruba woman; Work; Strategies; Wisdom; Equal rights; Police; Religion; Prayer; Life in the UK; Marriage; Simple life; Marriage with Children; Challenges; Strategies; Work; Decision; Money; Breadwinner; Christ-like; Self-control; Time; Sex; Children; Support System; Planning and Kids; Time; Impact; Communication; Women at receiving end; Planning; Religion; Prayers; Finance; Understanding; Equal rights; Tolerance and Patience; Environment; Freedom and Culture.

course of research. Owing to the aforementioned unethical lapses, ethical issues were of prime importance in this study. Adequate measures were put in place so as to handle and protect respondents' confidentiality. The respondents were made aware of their rights and freedom to cease participating during the interview sessions. Furthermore, prior to the commencement of the interviews, approval was sought from the Liverpool Hope University's Ethics Committee. The major issues that needed to be addressed were informed consent, value neutrality, privacy and confidentiality, data protection and non-invasive interaction with respondents.

2.10.1 Informed Consent

According to the ethical guidelines set out by the British Sociological Association (BSA)¹⁸⁵ and the Social Research Association (SRA),¹⁸⁶ sociological research must be based on the freely given informed consent of those studied. It means the researcher must explain to the participants what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken and how it is to be disseminated.¹⁸⁷ Consequently, I constantly ensured, as much as possible, and in terms meaningful to the respondents, that they were made aware of what the research was all about, and informed them of the nature and likely consequences of their participation. This explanation was done both in English and Yoruba, to make sure that they understood the whole process. Every participant was asked to sign a consent form.¹⁸⁸

In addition to all these necessary safeguards, I kept in mind that research is always a process of discovery and that its implications and consequences can never be fully

¹⁸⁵ For BSA, see <<http://www.britisoc.co.uk>> (Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association March 2002) pp. 1-16.

¹⁸⁶ For SRA see <<http://www.the-sra.org.uk>> (Social Research Association Guidelines Dec 2003), p. 8 - 16.

¹⁸⁷ Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 46.

¹⁸⁸ A model of the consent form is given in Appendix 1.

known at the outset. I was aware of the need to renegotiate the consent of the participants when and where it was needed.¹⁸⁹

2.10.2 Value Neutrality

One of the major ethical problems in social research is value neutrality.¹⁹⁰ Neutrality is to what extent the researcher allows his/her respondents to speak for themselves without any influence. For instance, in the course of participant observation, the researcher may develop an intimate relationship with the people under investigation. Consequently, the judgement of such a researcher about the people he/she studied may be either undermined or exaggerated because of affection for them. Although I had some religious and cultural views, I did not allow them to interfere or influence the outcome of this study.

2.10.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Another important ethical issue is the recognition and respect of the privacy of the respondents. David and Sutton are of the opinion that a researcher needs to obtain the consent of the respondent before invading their privacy.¹⁹¹ A researcher would also need to 'protect that privacy in the storage and the use of any data collected.'¹⁹² The protection can be by anonymity or confidentiality. Anonymity refers to the situation whereby you do not know or do not record the personal details (name, address and so

¹⁸⁹ R. Homan *The Ethics of Social Research* London: Longman, 1991, pp. 71-74.

¹⁹⁰ Matthew David and Carole D. Sutton *Social Research: The Basics* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2004, p. 19.

¹⁹¹ David and Sutton, p. 19.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

on) of those researched. Confidentiality refers to the situation where the information is known and recorded by the researcher, but is not revealed.¹⁹³

Most of the personal details of my respondents were not taken. Where they were known, they were not revealed. I used coded designations for the participants and they were referred to as respondents. (Please see Appendix 1). Furthermore, a researcher also needs to be aware of the sensitivity of the topic he/she is researching. It must also be noted that what is understood as sensitive by respondents may differ from the researcher's view. Sieber and Stanley define sensitive topics as:

Studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants or for the class of individuals represented by the research. For example, a study that examines the relative merits of day care for infants against full-time care by the mother can have broad social implications and thus can be considered socially sensitive.¹⁹⁴

Although Sieber and Stanley do not specify the scope and nature of the kind of consequences they have in mind, their definition encompasses research. Farberow sees sensitive topics as those areas of social life surrounded by taboo.¹⁹⁵ To him, taboo topics are those areas which are laden with emotion or which inspire feelings of awe or dread. Sex and death are two examples he uses. Lee, however, sees sensitive research as 'research that potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it.'¹⁹⁶ I align with this last definition because it is very simple and appears to summarise the above definitions. According to Lee, all researches,

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Joan Sieber and Barbara Stanley 'Ethical and Professional Dimensions of Social Sensitive Research' *American Psychology*, Vol. 43, 1978, p. 43 - 55.

¹⁹⁵ Norman L. Farberow, 'Introduction' in Norman L. Farberow (ed.), *Taboo Topics* New York: Atherton Press, 1963 p. 9.

¹⁹⁶ Lee *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, London, Newbury Park and New Delhi: Sage Publications 1993, p. 4

whether into religious or social lives, have their cost implications, but the cost of sensitive topics goes beyond the incidental or the merely onerous.¹⁹⁷

2.10.4 Non-Invasive Interaction with Respondents

To ensure non-invasiveness, when interviews were conducted, even though they were done in private, the participants had absolute freedom at any stage to refuse to answer questions or even to withdraw information supplied if they found it necessary or sensitive. Thus, the right to withdraw from participating in any topic that seems sensitive to the respondents was respected throughout the interview. Such ethical issues underscored why I introduced my topic and the purpose of the study at the beginning of the interview to enable them to decide whether to withdraw or participate.

¹⁹⁷ Lee (1993), p. 4

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: I

3.1 Introduction

No research is undertaken in a vacuum or in isolation.¹⁹⁸ A review of existing literature in a given discipline is essential for two reasons. First, it highlights the nature and depth of available research. Second, it facilitates the identification of any gaps in the existing knowledge. Paying attention to these reasons enables new researchers to join the on-going academic conversation, to avoid repetition and to offer fresh insight to scholarship. Given the overwhelming volume of available literature coupled with the centrality of the operational terms (power and marriage) that shapes the trajectory of this research, the literature review in this thesis is divided into two chapters. In chapter three, the notion of power, particularly with regard to how it shapes relationships, is discussed. Amba Oduyoye has identified the conspicuous role played by power relations in marriage within traditional societies.¹⁹⁹ In a Yoruba context, therefore, the question of power is not only central, but is also crucial to marital relationships, to the extent that to discuss one in the absence of the other seems as an aberration. The Chapter, therefore, examines key academic theories of power alongside Yoruba traditional conceptions that are expressed through wise sayings, parables and folklores. Chapter Four then explores the literature relating to the Yoruba traditional marriage system.

¹⁹⁸Helen Aveyard *Doing a Literature Review: In Health and Social Care* Berkshire: Open University Press, 2011, pp. 4 – 6.

3.2 Part One: Theorizing Power in Its General Context

3.2.1 Definitions and Understanding of Power

Power has been differently conceived. To a number of political commentators, power is seen as the act of influencing people's conduct with or without resistance, while the term authority is often used for 'power perceived as legitimate by the social structure'.²⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, a key theorist of power, states that there is no single and identical formula for a definition of power that can be applied either to all forms of society, or to all societies.²⁰¹ He writes:

Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points in the interplay or non-egalitarian and mobile relations. Relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships, but are immanent in the latter; they are the immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities and disequilibrium that occur in the latter, and conversely they are the internal conditions of these differentiations.²⁰²

As complex as Foucault's definition may appear, the central issue highlighted is the dispersed or capillary nature of power as opposed to the view that power is concentrated in the hand of the ruling elite, individuals or groups. And in Foucault's view, most contemporary analysis of power appears to give an immediate answer of referring to power as that which represses: 'Power represses nature, the instinct, a class, and individuals'.²⁰³ However, S. M. Lukes, another political commentator, conceives power from a more ideological perspective. To him, 'power is the ability to influence people's wishes and thoughts and make them want things that may not

²⁰⁰Joe. Magee and Adam D. Galinsky 'Social Hierarchy: The Self-Reinforcing Nature of Power and Status' *The Academy of Management Annals* Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2008, pp. 351- 398.

²⁰¹Michael Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, England: the Harvester Press, 1980, p. 90.

²⁰²Michel Foucault *The Will to Knowledge: the History of Sexuality (1)* London: Penguin Books, 1976, p. 94.

²⁰³Michael Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, p. 90.

necessarily benefit them,²⁰⁴ for example women supporting a patriarchal society. In this context, power is seen mainly as an instrument of control or making people to do what one desires even when it may not be to their benefit.

A more acceptable notion of power draws considerably from the concepts of Antonio Gramsci and Max Weber. While Gramsci argues that power should be conceived as a product of mutual consent and thus utilized through a mechanism of consensual relationships,²⁰⁵ Weber sees power as ‘the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which the probability rests’.²⁰⁶ This suggests that the one under the influence of power does not necessarily need to have a say or opinion, but is obliged to consent. As Anthony Giddens notes, while commenting on Weber, the use of the phrase ‘even’ suggests that power can be exercised either in the absence of resistance or even against resistance.²⁰⁷ Weber’s point, therefore, is not that resistance must be present in all power situations but that the overcoming of resistance is a necessary feature of power.

Marilyn French identifies two kinds of power: ‘power to’, which refers to ability, capacity and connotes a kind of freedom; and ‘power over’, which refers to domination. ‘Power to’ is one of the greatest pleasures available to humans; while ‘power over’ is one of the greatest pains.²⁰⁸ French’s distinction of power and control is helpful in taking the discussion further, because she breaks down the

²⁰⁴ Steven M. Luke ‘Power: A Radical View’ in *Power Critical Concepts* John Scott (ed). London: Routledge, 2003, p. 233.

²⁰⁵ Renate Holub *Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Post-Modernism* London: Routledge, 1992, p. 5.

²⁰⁶ J. M. Barbalet ‘Power and Resistance’ *The British Journal of Sociology* XXXVI, 4, 1985, p. 532.

²⁰⁷ Anthony Giddens and Phillip W. Sutton *Sociology* 7th ed. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013, pp. 967 – 1012.

²⁰⁸ Marilyn French *Beyond Power: on Women, Men and Morals* Canada: Ballantine Books, 1986, p. 156.

concept of power into more tightly argued categories that can be used to illustrate the reality among Yoruba couples. In her view, power and control are often used synonymously but there is a difference in thrust between them.

For French, power suggests 'large size and has connotations of moving outward, like an armed fist; control suggests tightness, detailed instrumentation, and has connotations of moving inward, pressing together or down, repressing, suppressing, oppressing, depressing.'²⁰⁹

French's ideas of power as 'an armed fist' and 'tightness' are located with the man. He has both physical and economic power with which he exercises control over his entire family; this accords with traditional Yoruba expectation that a man could beat his wife, punish her by withdrawing financial support or amass more wives.²¹⁰ However, for the Yoruba in England, this entire equation automatically changes because the man's power of 'armed fist' and 'tightness' shifts to the woman, who, in most cases, becomes the breadwinner.

J. M. Barbalet, in common with French, affirms that power relations imply acceptance on the part of those subjected to them and that no one possesses power but that power is given and it can be taken back. She defines power as 'a process, a dynamic interaction'.²¹¹ She asserts that 'to have power really means to have entry to a network of relationships in which one can influence, persuade, threaten, or cajole others to do what one wants or need them to do'.²¹² The exercise of power involves more than one person and is a two-way affair. Bertrand Russell's understanding of power as the ability to compel obedience also aligns with this view in the sense that he identifies the amount of impact that one can have on the other in any given

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.505.

²¹⁰ Okunola, Rashidi Akanji and Ojo Matahias Olufemidada 'Violence against Women: A Study of Ikire Area of Osun State Nigeria' *African Journal of Social Sciences* Vol. 2, No. 2, 2012, pp. 131 - 147.

²¹¹ J. M. Barbalet 'Power and Resistance' *the British Journal of Sociology* XXXVI, 4, pp. 531.

²¹² Marryn French, p. 505.

relationship.²¹³

Talcott Parsons sees power as ‘something possessed, a property possessed by an actor that enables him to alter the will or actions of others so that they conform to his will’.²¹⁴ In other words, power is principally a medium of domination and control. This view resonates with French’s and Raven’s description of power as a ‘stable potential influence in a dyadic relation between two persons’.²¹⁵ Aafke Komter further captures Raven’s idea by reiterating ‘that power is the ability to affect consciously or unconsciously the emotions, attitudes, cognitions, or behaviours of someone else.’²¹⁶ One can deduce from the above definitions that power could be seen as similar to terms such as influence, control, authority, assertiveness, and dominance, depending on the context.²¹⁷

Within contemporary Nigerian political theory, the views of power developed by M. M. Fadakinte, P. O. Odusanya and Lai Olurode are both salient and novel. From a philosophical perspective, Odusanya and Olurode describe power as a commodity of relationship that is negotiated between two players where the possessor is limited in her/his actions by the person who is at the receiving end. Put differently, the use or exercise of power is mutual instead of coercive.²¹⁸ They note that a major trend among theorists of power is the attempt to locate it in different sectors of society, giving rise to terms such as economic power, social power and political power.²¹⁹ They surmise, therefore, that ²²⁰ a power relation is a ‘dialectical

²¹³ Bertrand Russell *Power a New Analysis* London: Routledge 2004, p. 24.

²¹⁴ French, p. 506.

²¹⁵ Liu, Hutchison and Hong Conjugal Power and Decision Making: A Methodological Note on Cross-Cultural Study of the Family *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 79, No.1, July 1973, pp. 254 – 270, p. 256.

²¹⁶ Aafke Komter Hidden Power in Marriage *Gender and Society* Vol. 3, No. 2, June 1989, pp.187 - 216

²¹⁷ Anthony Giddens and Phillip W. Sutton, p. 968.

²¹⁸ P. O. Odusanya and Lai Olurode *Readings in Introductory Sociology*, Nigeria: John West Publications Ltd, 2001, p. 56.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 209.

²²⁰ Odusanya and Olurode *Readings in Introductory Sociology* p. 57.

relationship’.²²¹

Fadakinte distances himself from the above proposition, taking a more metaphysical or romanticized view of power.²²² To him, the Nigerian political landscape offers a seminar platform in understanding the dynamics of power. He asserts that ‘the Nigerian state is weak, arising from the fragmentation of the dominant class and resulting in factional struggle for power and creating chaos, which inhibits the institutionalization of hegemonic order, the order that should create the guiding values for society.’²²³

The idea of ‘a dominant class’, coupled with the perennial ‘struggle for power’, is symptomatic of how power shapes relationships within the Nigerian setting, be they personal, communal or political. As is common with most traditional societies, leadership is often determined by variables such as social status, gender or age.²²⁴ In the end, the essence of power becomes a means by which a small number of people impose their will on a more reluctant majority. And such asymmetrical, rather than collegial understanding, mirrors the ways that power is seen, understood and utilized by Nigerians.

In summary, six major features can be identified from the various definitions of power explored above. The first understands ‘power as the ability to achieve desired goals or outcomes,’ whether phrased in terms of changing the behaviour of others or producing intended effects. The second claims that ‘power is a system property, rather than the personal attribute of an individual.’ The third argues that ‘power is dynamic, rather than static, and therefore involves reciprocal causation.’ The fourth

²²¹*Ibid*, p.159.

²²²M. M. Fadakinte The Nature and Character of the Nigerian State: Explaining Election Crisis in a Peripheral State’ *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* Vol. 12, 11, 2013, pp. 275 - 287.

²²³*Ibid*, p. 276

²²⁴Akinterinwa, B. *Nigerian’s National Interests in a Globalising World Forth Reflections on Constructive and Beneficial Concentric* Vol. 2, Ibadan: Bolytag Inter. Publishers, p. 58.

notes that ‘power is both a perceptual and behavioural phenomenon.’ The fifth contends that power always involves asymmetrical relations, although the power of an individual in one sphere may be compensated by the power of the other in another interest sphere. Thus, across interest spheres, power relations may be characterized as being symmetrical and sometimes egalitarian. The sixth argues that ‘power is multidimensional in nature, including socio-structural, interactional, and outcome components’.²²⁵ With the various definitions of power in place, it is necessary to ask how power is conceived within the Yoruba tradition.

3.3. Understanding Power through Yoruba Oral Traditional Practices

In the opinion of Bolaji Idowu, ‘most of African traditional culture and heritage came down to us through oral traditions’.²²⁶ Core to the oral tradition is the use of proverbs, which ‘express wisdom acquired through reflection, experience, observation and general knowledge,’²²⁷ and which reflects the cultural understanding of the people. J. A. Adedeji defines oral tradition as: ‘that complex corpus of verbal or spoken art created as a means of recalling the past and based on the ideas, beliefs, symbols, assumptions, attitudes and sentiments of people. It is acquired through a process of learning or initiation and its purpose is to condition social action and foster social interaction.’²²⁸

²²⁵ Gerald W. McDonald Family Power: The Assessment of a Decade of Theory and Research 1970-1979 *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1980, p. 843.

²²⁶ Bolaji Idowu *Olodumare* London: Longman, 1962, p.6.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 6.

²²⁸ J. A. Adedeji Oral Tradition and the Contemporary Theater In Nigeria *Research in African Literature* Vol. 2, No. 2, Autumn, 1971, pp. 134 - 148, p. 134.

Yetunde Olukemi Akorede asserts that ‘African oral narratives and poetry are significant tools of acculturation and socialization of the young’.²²⁹ They are also important for the dissemination and preservation of traditional philosophical and religious beliefs. Oral narratives are part of the ways in which Yoruba tradition and culture have been preserved.²³⁰ Commenting on a similar note, Oyeronke Olajubu affirms that Yoruba oral tradition institutes the main foundation of ‘any information on Yoruba religion and culture.’²³¹ She avers that ‘proverbs, rituals, recitations, and religious ceremonies serve as indispensable sources of information in this regard.’²³²

Myth contributes towards the understanding of perception of women, especially among the Yoruba. It encapsulates the totality of a particular society and facilitates understanding of their history. Mbiti states that it ‘is a language depicting truths or realities for which history does not provide a full explanation.’²³³ Therefore, these myths, proverbs, wise sayings, and traditional metaphysics are the bedrock of beliefs, which are difficult to accept outside the worldviews of an African who experiences the context that informs them. Thus, it is necessary to examine Yoruba oral tradition, in order to determine how power is perceived and disseminated among them. This discussion begins with proverbs.

²²⁹ Yetunde Olukemi Akorede *Womanism and the Intra-Gender Conflict Theory* Republic of Benin: Editions Sonou D’ Afrique, 2011, p. 64.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 64.

²³¹ Oyeronke Olajubu *Women in Yoruba Religious Sphere* New York: University of New York Press, p. 8.

²³² *Ibid*, p. 8.

²³³ John Mbiti *Flowers in the Garden: The Role of Women in African Religion* *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society* Jacob Olupona (ed.), New York: Paragon House, 1991, p. 59.

3.3.2.1 Proverbs

In Yoruba culture, proverbs are appreciated as the vehicle for words; they are used to express deep philosophical truths.²³⁴ A proverb is defined as a succinct expression or words in common use, articulating an insightful picture about life or a conventionally acknowledged fact. According to Abiodun Ogunwale, ‘most proverbs are rooted in folklore and have been preserved by oral tradition.’²³⁵ He notes that a proverb is a short sentence, usually known by many people, stating something commonly experienced or a wise saying. In addition, Oladele Abiodun Balogun submits that although the use of proverbs may differ from people to people, what is common to them is their wide-ranging relevance on issues of everyday living. As a result, proverbs are highly esteemed in the rational and communicative process of a particular group of people.²³⁶

R.A.Tiamiyu and G.A. Olaleye²³⁷ posit that proverbs are very significant in traditional Africa, hence the saying among the Yoruba *Owe lesin oro, oro lesin owe; ti oro ba sonu owe la fin nwa* (a proverb is a guide to a word and a word is a guide to a proverb).²³⁸ In other words, when a word is missing, it is a proverb that is used to locate it; proverbs are used to elucidate statements and show the wisdom, maturity and social status of the user. Olabode equally affirms that proverbs ‘are collections of

²³⁴ Ruth Finnegan *Oral Literature in Africa* London: Open Book Publisher, 2012, p. 389.

²³⁵ Ogunwale, Joshua Abiodun The Derogation of Masculinity in Yoruba Proverbs *Nordic Journal of African Studies* Vol. 7, No. 1, 1998, pp. 103 – 113.

²³⁶ Oladele Abiodun Balogun Proverbial Oppression of Women in Yoruba African Culture: A Philosophical Overview *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK)* New Series Vol.2, No.1, June 2010, pp. 21-36, p. 22.

²³⁷ R. A. Tiamiyu, and G.A. Olaleye Proverbs and Taboos as Limitations on the Rights and Privileges of Women in South-Western Nigeria in Kehinde, A. (ed.) *Gender and Development: Essential Reading* Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd, 2009, p.116.

²³⁸ Isaac O. Delano ‘Owe-Lesin Oro’: *Yoruba Proverbs, their Meaning and Usage* Ibadan, Nigeria: Oxford University press, 1966, p. 20.

the wisdom of the people and carry authority in respect of social relationship'.²³⁹

Similarly, N.A. Fadipe describes a proverb 'as a core linguistic arena for resisting language invasion and upholding the purity of language, which in turn sustains the Yoruba tradition and cultural identity'.²⁴⁰

However, relevant as proverbs are among the Yoruba, O.O. Familusi opines that some of them are tacitly employed to negatively indicate that women are inferior, weak, subservient and immoral.²⁴¹ He explains some of those proverbs; some of them are presented below:

1. '*Owu ti iya gbon lomo n ran*', (the attitudes of the mother are emulated by her offspring). This proverb is related to comportment or behaviour. In this case, the mother is seen as immoral and ill mannered; and every badly behaved child takes after her and summarily belongs to her. On the other hand, the father is exonerated; good children belong to him and he is always proud of such children.
2. '*Omo to dara niti baba; eyi ti ko dara niti iya*' (a well-behaved child belongs to the father: the ill-mannered one belongs to the mother.) By inference, the reservations men have about a bad child could be expressed beyond proportion, as such a child could be disowned and the mother accused of complacency.
3. '*Ailokurin nile lobinrin njogun ada*' (the absence of male affords a female the opportunity of inheriting a cutlass.) Traditionally, men use the cutlass

²³⁹ B. O. Olabode African Gender Myth in Proverbs and Verbal Discourses; A Case Study of the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria in Kehinde, A. (ed.) *Gender and Development: Essential Readings* Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2009, p. 131.

²⁴⁰ Fadipe *The sociology of Yoruba*, p. 36.

²⁴¹ O. O. Familusi African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example *The Journal of Pan African Studies* Vol. 5, No. 1, March 2012, p. 302.

(machete) as a farm implement; it symbolizes power and is the essence of economic empowerment.²⁴²This proverb is an indirect way of asserting that women are reserved for subservient roles within Yoruba society.

In a similar vein, Oduyoye claims that it is African culture that permits the language that empowers the community to reduce the humanity of women.²⁴³Consistent with Familusi, Oladele Balogun states that several rudiments of domination can be located in some Yoruba proverbs that relate to women. According to him, these proverbs infringe on the rights and dignity of women, and are a demonstration of discrimination against them.²⁴⁴Some of the offensive proverbs that Oladele views as derogatory and dehumanizing are examined below:²⁴⁵

1. *'Tio ba nidi obirin ki ije Kumolu'* (a woman cannot be named Kumolu just for any reason). Among the Yoruba, Kumolu is a name that is solely reserved for males in the family, especially those who are potential leaders of their families. This name confers great respect and dignity on the bearer. By implication, it follows that, where there are men, women are not recognized. This suggests that under normal circumstances, power is reserved for men and not women. Therefore, it is an anomaly for a woman to take a leadership position in a Yoruba family where there are men.
2. *'Ile t'obinrin tin se atoto arere, igi arere ni hu nibe'* (Any family that allows women to be vocal will see the abnormal growth of *Arere* inside the house.)*Arere* is a tree

²⁴²*Ibid*, p. 302.

²⁴³ Oduyoye Keynote Address in Akintunde, D. O. (ed.,) *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Right*, p. 7.

²⁴⁴ Oladele Balogun Proverbial Oppression of Women in Yoruba African Culture: A Philosophical Overview *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK) New Series* Vol.2, No.1, June 2010, pp. 21-36, p.24.

²⁴⁵*Ibid*, p. 25.

that emits a terrible odour and only grows wild.²⁴⁶ This means that when a wife is vocal in taking decisions in the home, abnormal circumstances becomes unavoidable. This promotes the culture of silence, which is seen as a virtue and expected from Yoruba women.²⁴⁷

3. '*Eni to f arewà, ó f eyonu, nítorí nibi gbogbo ní í ba won tan*'²⁴⁸ (The person who marries a beautiful woman marries trouble, because she claims to be related to everybody.) This proverb portrays women most especially the beautiful ones as promiscuous. It labels them in society and makes them object of suspicion. A similar proverb that promotes almost the same view is '*Baa fi gbogbo ile nla jin kolekole, kope o ma jale die kun; bi a si fi gbogbo odede jin iyawo agbere, kope o ma tara re f'ale*'²⁴⁹ ('Give a mansion to a thief, that does not prevent him from stealing; give a promiscuous wife all you have in a beautiful house, that does not preclude her from selling herself cheaply to a paramour.')²⁵⁰ This proverb indicates that women are unpredictable and insatiable, with regard to sexual and marital issues. Even though Yoruba tradition allows polygamy, it perceives polyandry with disdain. Balogun affirms that 'this proverb is an expression of distrust and a deterministic conception of women as evil.'²⁵¹
4. '*Aya bere, òsì bere*'²⁵² (many wives, multiple penury.) In other words, the proverb implies that since a single wife ordinarily constitutes penury, to have multiple wives is to have multiple penury because it is expensive to maintain a wife.
5. '*Adekunle ni oruko okunrin, Adetule ni oruko obinrin.*' ('The name of a male is

²⁴⁶ Kolawole, Mary E. Modupe, *Womanism and African Consciousness* Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc, 1997, p. 19.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.19

²⁴⁸ Kola Akinlade, *Òwe Pelú Ìtumo* (A-GB) Ibadan: Longman Press, p. 14, 1987.

²⁴⁹ Balogun Proverbial Oppression of Women in Yoruba African Culture: A Philosophical Overview, *Thought and Practice* p. 26.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 26.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 27.

²⁵² *Ibid*, p. 29.

increaser of the home while that of a female is reducer of home’.)²⁵³ This depopulation of the family by the female child has to do with the fact that a woman marries and leaves the family of procreation, while the male marries in and also reproduces to increase the size of the family. This proverb is closely linked with the previous one discussed above. The two are buttressing the fact that a preferential place is given to male children in the Yoruba family. In the words of Familusi, ‘a male child who will bring a woman or women is preferred to the one who will leave her parental home after marriage. This is why the male child is metaphorically referred to as the pillar of the family “*opomulero*” while the female one symbolizes a seasonal stream’.²⁵⁴

6. ‘*Pashan ta fi na yale, oun be laja fun ’yawo* (The whip that was used to beat the first wife is kept for the second wife.) The underlying assumption of this proverb is that a woman is regarded as a child, to be disciplined anytime she errs, and that a man has the right to beat his wife (wives). It equally gives men the prerogative to marry more than one wife, and that the second wife should not expect preferential treatment. Inherent in this proverb is the notion of women’s inferiority to men.
7. ‘*Esin obinrin soro gùn, o le gbéni subù*’ (‘It is not good for a man to climb on his wife’s horse because he can make him fall.’) As a metaphor, the horse is used to represent the whims of one’s wife. The proverb is a warning that men who go by the whims of their wives cause their own downfall. Familusi notes that this proverb is biased against women, because it excludes the understanding and skilful counsel women are capable of giving to their husbands, associates, friends and relatives

²⁵³ Kola Akinlade p. 37

²⁵⁴ Familusi African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 5, 1, March 2012, pp. 302 - 315.

(whether male or female).²⁵⁵

8. '*Obinrin ko se finu han*' – 'Secrets should not be revealed to a woman'.²⁵⁶ This proverb implies that women naturally have the tendency to divulge secrets. It explains, partly or wholly, why women are not always involved in decision-making, despite their indispensable contributions to society.²⁵⁷
9. '*Kobìnrin tatorin kokùnrin tatorin, enikan ní láti lomi leyìn ese ju ara won.*' (Let a woman and a man walk while urinating: one of them will have messy feet much more than the other.)²⁵⁸ Although the literal interpretation of this proverb emphasizes gender differences, philosophically, it connotes the idea of male superiority. Commenting in a similar vein, J. D. Y. Peel observes that the fact that a dead man's wife is assigned to a new husband within the lineage substantiates the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of Yoruba society.²⁵⁹

Furthermore, while corroborating the nature of patriarchal dominance within wider African society, of which the Yoruba people are an integral part, Tamara Braam and Leila Hessini point out that patriarchy is the systematic, organized and unjustified control of women by men. It is promoted and sustained by practices, behaviours, culture and belief systems that maintain, justify and legitimize male superiority over women.²⁶⁰ Men are seen as the yardstick or standard of what is normal; their life experiences, ideas and orientations are usually taken as the basis on which social needs are measured, shape policy requirements and dispense resources.²⁶¹

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 28.

²⁵⁶ Kola Akinlade, p. 37.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.28.

²⁵⁸ Kola Akinlade, p. 38.

²⁵⁹ J. D. Y. Peel *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, p. 62.

²⁶⁰ Tamara Braam and Leila Hessini 'The Power Dynamics Perpetuating Unsafe Abortion in Africa: A Feminist Perspective' *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 8, 1, Apr. 2004, pp. 43 - 51.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 47.

10. '*Okunrin le niayamefa ko buru; okunrin kan soso ni Oluwa yan fobinrin.*' (A man can have six wives; it is not bad, but to one man only, God appointed a woman to marry'.)²⁶² This further shows how the authority of the divine is employed within culture to legitimate male dominance and women's servitude. For example, the people will never frown at a man marrying more than one wife; thus, any woman can become second, third or fourth wife; but women are only permitted to marry one husband.

3.3.2.2 *Myths and Stories*

In spite of the negative references made above, other oral traditions, such as myths and stories, portray women as very powerful. For instance, Oyeronke Olajubu affirms that, in the religious sphere, women often serve as priestesses and votary maids, thus bridging the gap between mortals and the Supreme Being. They are known to be in possession of the mystical powers that preserve the Yoruba community. Women also serve as professionals who attend to the medical needs of people, especially gynaecological and paediatric need, as traditional birth attendants. In fact, they constitute the sustaining factor of the various religious cults, with the responsibilities of daily worship and upkeep of the place of worship, as well as of the custodians of the elements of worship.²⁶³ To substantiate this claim, Olajubu narrates one of the myths that came from the Ifa corpus. According to this myth, 'at the beginning of time, *Olodumare*, the Supreme Being, gave women power over men and encouraged the interdependence of male and female in the world.'²⁶⁴ According to *odu osa-*

²⁶²Familusi African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example *The Journal of Pan African Studies* Vol. 5, 1, March 2012, p. 304.

²⁶³ Oyeronke Olajubu *Women in the Yoruba Sphere* New York: State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 26.

²⁶⁴*Ibid*, 27.

*meji*²⁶⁵ of the Ifa Corpus:

*Nigbati won nbo laye, awon obinrin, won kori nkankan yan
latodo Olodumare
Nwon nbi ara won pe agbara wo ni awon ni, láti se gbogbo
nkan tawon fe se layeAwon okunrin bere si yan awon obinrin
je, Nwon nlo won bi eru, ati bi ko ti yeAwon obinrin bato
Olodumare lo, nwon ko ejo won ro fun, aanu won se
OlodumareO si fun won ni agbara, tio ko ja gbogbo ti awon fun
awon okunrin lo
Olodumare lo gbe ase fun awon obinrin, oni awon aje ko
gbodo maa lo láti di ya je niken*

Meaning:

When they were coming to the earth, women had no powers from Olodumare

Women asked themselves as to what powers they had to do all that they wanted to do on earth; men were maltreating the women. Men enslaved them and treated them harshly; women then returned to Olodumare and reported the case, Olodumare was moved with compassion. Olodumare promised them a power greater than that of men. Olodumare gave women power over men. Women were instructed not to use the power indiscriminately, Olodumare endowed women with the power of *aje* –the witches.

The above suggests that the powers being exhibited by Yoruba women are inherent and that, from the inception, man has always been abusing women. Hence, in order to balance the equation, women were endowed with mysterious powers of witchcraft. However, Olajubu cites another myth that tells how men tricked women and took away their power with the intention to perpetuate their dominance.²⁶⁶

It is interesting to note that among the Yoruba, God is revealed as having both a masculine and a feminine image. Omoyajowo observes that the myth of Oduduwa as a female is still very strong in Ile-Ife, even though Oduduwa is mainly viewed as a male progenitor. In Yoruba mythology, Oduduwa was known as a female and was

²⁶⁵ 'Odu osa meji' is an integral and significant teaching of Ifa Corpus; unlike a number of Yoruba Wise sayings, it pays particular attention to value of women. *Ibid*, p.27.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 67.

called *Iya* (mother) Male –mother of divinities.²⁶⁷ Also, the sex of Olodumare is not so clarified but he is represented in both male and female divinities. Yemoja²⁶⁸ is regarded as the mother of all the rivers in Yoruba land.

A catalogue of these river (female divinities) goddesses includes:

Yemoja Goddess/Mother of fishes
Olosa Goddess of Lagoon
Olokun Goddess of Sea
Oya Goddess of River Niger
Osun Goddess of River Osun
Oba Goddess of River Oba²⁶⁹

There were stories surrounding each of these goddesses. For example, Oya is pictured as a tall, comely and graceful wife of Sango. She contested against sixteen other river goddesses to win Sango. She has a charming and elegant personality. Yet, she is a powerful, fierce Amazon, the real power behind Sango. Sango could not accomplish anything without Oya's help.²⁷⁰ She was often hailed as '*Obinrin to tori ogun da 'rugbon si Efufulele ti da gi loke Asujomaro*. ('The woman who grows a beard on account of war; the rushing wind that tears down trees from the top, one who causes a heavy cloud but brings no rain.')²⁷¹ In other words, she can be devastating when annoyed or when facing opposition.

An illustration of such conquest was expressed in a story; it claimed that she helped her new husband, Sango, to overcome her ex-husband, Ogun. This incidence earned Oya the title '*Iya aasan*': 'a woman capable of turning herself into nine'. Consequently, Oya was acclaimed to be more powerful not only than Ogun, but also

²⁶⁷Parrinder, E.G. *The Story of Ketu*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1956, p.45.

²⁶⁸*Ibid*, p. 46.

²⁶⁹Omoyajowo *Place of Women in African Traditional Religion and among the Yoruba*, p.75.

²⁷⁰Bolaji Idowu *Olodumare*, p. 91.

²⁷¹*Ibid*, p. 91.

more than her new husband, Sango.²⁷² Below are the verses of the Ifa corpus to buttress this view:

Etuni n fibimimisejo: Akukonii fare idi soso
Adiafunya Aasan: Tin lo reeFariraLoko
Oko n runa: Aya re nrujo
O la bee mo: Peleewalaa ti sete
Etetewabami ni arusegun: Arusegun la a sete
Aya roro joko lo o: Aya roro joko lo
Tani o mop Oya oriri: Lo roro ju sangooo
*Aya roro joko lo*²⁷³

Meaning:

It is the duiker that makes a cool place its dancing arena: It is the cock that uses its tail as ornamental object. Divined Ifa for the woman called Aasan: Who was going to be the wife of Arira. The husband is conjuring fire: The wife is conjuring rain. She asked whether we don't know that: It is their house where wars are conquered. Come post-haste to meet us at conquest: Conquest is ours at wars. The wife is more aggressive than the husband: Who doesn't know that Oya nicknamed Oriri is more aggressive than Sango: The wife is more aggressive than the husband.²⁷⁴

In summary, although Yoruba folk wisdom, parables or stories have several sayings that praise women, affirm their power, adore their motherhood and empower them, such are often dwarfed by the cultural notion of patriarchy and male dominance. Consequently, women's subservient demeanour is not only equated with being a proper or cultured Yoruba woman, but also there is an expectation for them to translate such idea (of asymmetrical and hierarchical power relations) into any form of relationship, especially to their husbands. This is seen as the norm and also as central and inevitable in the quest for orderliness and communal cohesion.

²⁷² Judith Gleason, *Oya: In Praise of the Goddess*, Boston: Shambhala, 1987, p.1.

²⁷³ Lucas, J. Olumide *The Religion of the Yorubas*, Lagos: C.M.S. Bookshop, 1948, p. 171.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 172.

3.4 Power as It Relates to Marriage

The place of power in marriage has attracted significant attention in research.²⁷⁵ Roger J. Baran posits that ‘determining which spouse assumes the decision-maker role is usually of prime importance since this is oftentimes equated with which spouse has the power, influence, or authority’.²⁷⁶ He affirms that the impact of culture on husband-wife relationship in terms of decision-making in the family has been shown in numerous studies. For example, husband dominance has been found to exist in Venezuela, China, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, India, Greece and Yugoslavia and Africa.²⁷⁷ In contrast, joint decision-making influence has been found to exist primarily in Europe and North America. Moreover, wife dominance is said to exist in the Navajo culture and Black subculture in the US.²⁷⁸ The point to note here is that the incidence of dominance by the man or woman is common across all cultures and societies. Phyllis Hallenbeck comments: ‘It is in marriage and family life that we see the broadest ranges of influence and the greatest likelihood of all types of power coming into use, because in family life there occurs the greatest interaction of cultural, social and personal factors over the period of time.’²⁷⁹

Life in Yoruba society, as earlier indicated, is not only patrilineal and hierarchical but asymmetrical in every shade of relationship. Thus, inter-personal relations are determined by patriarchal and asymmetrical connotations. To Akintunde and Labeodan, patriarchy is a ‘culture that is slanted so that men are valued a lot and

²⁷⁵Katharine Charley (ed.) *Transnational Marriage: New Perspectives from Europe and Beyond* London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2012 and Roger J. Baran, “Cultural Role Expectations, Husband-Wife Resources and Competence: Their Effect on Decision-Making Influence in Black and White Families in USA, *AFBE Journal* 3, 1, June 2010, pp. 128 – 144.

²⁷⁶*Ibid*, p.129

²⁷⁷*Ibid*, p. 129.

²⁷⁸*Ibid*, p. 129.

²⁷⁹*Ibid*, p. 844.

women are valued less; or in which man's prestige is up and women's prestige is down.²⁸⁰

In a similar light, O. A. Aina describes patriarchy as a 'system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex, which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of the females'.²⁸¹ This emphasizes male dominance at the expense of women which ranges from overt physical violence to verbal abuse.²⁸² 'Patriarchy sculpts unequal gender power relationships and takes power away from women in decisions even about their bodies'.²⁸³ Among the Yoruba, authority in the home rests solely with the husband who is responsible for all decisions in the family, while the woman passively follows –women are to be seen but not heard. Consequently, a woman claiming equality with a man is an aberration.²⁸⁴ Thus, the inequality of men and women is clearly depicted and accepted within the Yoruba tradition.

Danesh argues that, historically, power has been abused at all levels of human relationships either in the context of marriage, family, society or the world at large.²⁸⁵ Given such articulation of power imbalance, Danesh opines that the lack of equality between men and women has been the most important contributor to the miseries of married life. He argues that 'male dominance of women in the past has brought violence and sadness to numerous women, and the continued prevalence of power struggle in marriage will always result in new forms of misery in spousal and

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 3.

²⁸¹ Aina, O. I. *Nigerian Women in Society and Development*, Ibadan, Nigeria: Dokun Publishing House, p. 6.

²⁸² Renato Rosaldo, 'Notes toward a Critique of Patriarchy from a Male Position' *Anthropological Quarterly*, 7, 2, 1993, p. 81.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 81.

²⁸⁴ Akintunde and Labeodan, *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa*, p. 4.

²⁸⁵ Danesh, *the Violence – Free Family: Building Block of Peaceful Civilization*, p. 62.

family life.’²⁸⁶ In addition, a radical feminist theorist maintains that ‘gender structures are specific to the male-female relationship and are always based on male domination’.²⁸⁷ The argument here depicts the fact that the tendency for men to be oppressive is intrinsic in most cultures.

With regard to the Yoruba context, Adeoti Oluwatosin Akintan avers that:

Traditionally, women are conceptualized as the bearer of human beings or as a special specimen of the human race or as the chattel of men, whose purpose is to work and bear children. Also, they are regarded as the source through whom kinship and succession is determined or better still, as the powerful pivot which presents the picture of weakness both in the home and in the society. The inhumane treatment of women as sustained by patriarchy has more or less relegated them to a position of powerlessness within the Yoruba setting.²⁸⁸

Ellen Bonaparte accentuates Akintan’s proposition: ‘power has been a thorny problem for the women movement. As an oppressed group, women have suffered from powerlessness. Yet the simple solution of gaining more power in the context of existing power structures has been rejected as perpetuating patterns of oppression’.²⁸⁹ One can distil from Akintan’s and Bonaparte’s views the utilitarian and subservient undertone that are often associated with women, where, at best, they are seen as tools to be used either for child bearing or for male satisfaction.

Based on my fieldwork and engagement with the literature on power, this thesis argues that the vexing issue in contemporary marital relationships among the Yoruba couples in the NWE is the quest for equality between men and women. On the one

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 60.

²⁸⁷ Faith Robertson Elliot, *The Family: Change or Continuity*, New York: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1986, p. 106.

²⁸⁸ Adeoti Oluwatosin Akintan *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa* Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer, 2002, p. 10.

²⁸⁹ Ellen Boneparth A Frame Work for Policy Analysis’ Women Power and Policy Ellen Boneparth ed., New York: Pergamon Press, 1982, p. 14.

hand, the issue of power among couples has witnessed virulent and destructive outcomes. On the other hand, power, which, within the Yoruba tradition is seen as the absolute preserve of men, is now being exercised by women and thus warrants a renegotiation of spousal power. Consequently, such power struggles are not only common, but also characterize a number of marriages. The implications of such tensions are troubling. For example, all the respondents during my interview agreed that the major source of marital crisis among the Yoruba in the NWE centres on power.

Tamara Braam and Leila Hessini state that male dominance and oppression go beyond individuals and persons; they are being institutionalized.²⁹⁰ Gender inequality is conspicuous in social and political spheres; in education, employment, religious practices and other aspects of life. 'Political leadership is male dominated and men's needs and experiences establish political agenda, the norms for policy decisions and priorities for resource allocation.'²⁹¹ In support of this proposition, Catherine E. Ross, from an American context, maintains that marriage is an establishment of social power where there are checks and balances. For example, husbands may be reluctant to indulge themselves in heavy drinking, drug abuse, traffic offences, or taking other risks that are likely to endanger their health because there is a likelihood that their wives may control their conduct from time to time and this may possibly diminish their sense of sovereignty and autonomy.²⁹²

²⁹⁰Tamara Braam and Leila Hessini 'The Power Dynamics Perpetuating Unsafe Abortion in Africa: A Feminist Perspective' *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 8, Apr., 2004, pp. 43-51, p. 44

²⁹¹Ibid, p. 44.

²⁹²Danesh *The Violence free Family: Building Block of Peaceful Civilization*, p. 4.

Rollo May,²⁹³ an American existential psychologist, identifies five kinds of power, three destructive and two constructive. The destructive kinds are exploitative, manipulative, and competitive used against another person. The two constructive kinds of power are nutrient, used for the other person; and integrative, used with the other person. Danesh claims that it is the abuse of power that characterizes the authoritarian human relationship.²⁹⁴ Safilios Rothschild, however, maintains that theories about power structures may remain cosmetic and academic until the methodology of power relation studies improves to include a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of power and from the points of view of both husband and wife.²⁹⁵

Consistent with Denesh and Rothschild's argument, a number of women respondents claimed that the inability of Yoruba men to fully engage their traditional understanding of power with the current socio-cultural climate in the NWE has become inimical to successful marriage.²⁹⁶ They expressed their dismay that their husband would not even allow them to air their opinion or be consulted before making decisions that affect the family. For example, Respondent 14 submitted that the aim of her husband was to dominate and control everything about her life. When further asked to explain what she meant by 'dominate' or 'control' she stated that: 'my husband wants to dictate everything in this house and this cannot continue'. Similarly, Respondent 8 asserted that: 'every woman will feel inferior if her husband refuses to listen or not treat her like a human being and no one is prepared for such treatment in this day and age.' They further described how some Yoruba men would

²⁹³ Rollo May was the writer most responsible for introducing European existentialism to US readers.

²⁹⁴ Danesh *The Violence – free Family: Building Block of Peaceful Civilization*, p. 64.

²⁹⁵ Gerald W. McDonald Family Power: the Assessment of a Decade of Theory and Research, 1970-1979, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1980, p. 841.

²⁹⁶ This reflects the views of the majority of the female respondents and Respondents 1, 7, 9 interviewed when asked about the prominent view of the men that women are usurping their authority in England.

go to any length to exercise their authority over their wives. Thus, to these women, such mental, physical and psychological abuse that results from men trying to exercise their power at all costs will likely portend serious marital challenges.

Reginald Peyton, Sarah Pitts, and Rob H. Kamery identify four major theoretical models that guide most of the research on the family decision-making process. They are resource theory, social exchange theory, role theory, and the process-oriented model.²⁹⁷

Given the interplay between resources and exercise of power in the family, the next section focuses primarily on resource control. This will facilitate further understanding and thus locate the overarching principles that inform the family decision-making process among Diaspora Yoruba Christians.

3.5 Resource Theory

A number of the early research in family decision-making significantly drew from the resource theory model proposed by Blood and Wolfe.²⁹⁸ They examined ‘associations between power inside the family and power outside the family’, noting that ‘power was apportioned between husbands and wives based on the resources that each contributed to the family.’²⁹⁹ Special focus was on the resources of income, occupational prestige, and educational attainment. They indicated that the greater a

²⁹⁷ Reginald Peyton, Sarah Pitts and Rob H. Kamery A Review of Significant Consumer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction Models: The Family Decision-Making Process, Academy of Family Business, Vol. 1, No.12, Las Vegas: 2003, p. 9.

²⁹⁸ Patryk Babiar, Cliff A. Robb and Ann Woodward ‘Family Decision Making and Resource Protection Adequacy’, pp. 1-36. Michael A. Belch and Laura A. Willis ‘Family Decision at the turn of the century: has the changing structure of the households impacted the family decision-making process? *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* Vol. 2, Issue 2, December 2002, pp. 111 - 124. Brian Jory and Carrie L. Yodanis ‘Power Family Relationships and Marital Relationships’ *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family* New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003. pp. 126 – 37.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 9.

spouse's resources in these areas, the greater the perceived power within the family.³⁰⁰ Blood and Wolfe observe that sociologists take great interest in determining which spouse assumes the decision-making role in the family. This is usually of prime importance because it often indicates which spouse has the power, influence, or authority.³⁰¹

Resource theorists argue that the relative power 'that a spouse wields in the family decision-making process varies directly with the socio-economic resources contributed by that spouse rather than being based on traditional patriarchal ideas'.

³⁰²The basic argument is that the power of each spouse is directly dependent upon the context to which that spouse contributes valued resources to the marriage.³⁰³ A valued resource is typically defined as 'anything one partner may make available to the other, helping the latter satisfies his or her needs'.³⁰⁴ There is an association between power inside the family and power outside the family; power is apportioned between husbands and wives based on the relative resources that each contributed to the family.³⁰⁵

Blood and Wolfe's focus is on the resources of income, occupational prestige, and educational attainment, and they hold that the greater the man's resources then the greater his perceived power within the family. This suggests that men do not become heads of households by divine right or biological determinism, but because they have more and easier access to educational, financial, and occupational resources in

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 204.

³⁰¹ Roger J. Baran "Cultural Role Expectations, Husband-Wife Resources and Competence: Their Effect on Decision-Making Influence in Black and White Families in USA" *AFBE Journal* 3, 1, June 2010, pp.126 - 144.

³⁰² Peyton, Pitts and Kamery 'A Review of Significant Consumer Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction Models: the Family Decision-Making Process, p. 9.

³⁰³ Blood and Wolfe *Husbands & Wives: The Dynamics of Married Living*, p. 126.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

³⁰⁵ Patryk Babiar, Cliff A. Robb and Ann Woodward 'Family Decision Making and Resource Protection Adequacy' *Journal of Consumer Affairs* Vol. 46, Issue 1, spring 2012, pp. 1 – 36.

society. Thus, resource theory advocates that opening up women's access to resources outside the family could result in a more evenly balanced distribution of power within the family.³⁰⁶ Hill and Scanzoni³⁰⁷ expand Blood and Wolfe's original ideas, referring to:

three major domains of power, which are relevant in family relationships. The first domain is related to the resource that an individual contributes since that affects the ability to exercise power in a given decision-making situation. The second domain is related to the power processes and focuses on the interaction of family members at various stages in the decision-making process. The third domain is related to power outcomes and focuses upon who makes the final decisions and who wins the discussion or the argument.³⁰⁸

Although similar to Hill and Scanzoni, Edgell connected the dominance of husbands within the family to their roles as breadwinners.³⁰⁹ However, in a more recent study of middle-class couples, the findings revealed otherwise.³¹⁰ Michael A. Belch and Laura A. Willis suggest that 'decisions about house purchase, children's education, holidays and leisure activities are jointly made; routine housekeeping decisions are made mainly by the wife while career-related decisions are made by the husband.'³¹¹ Consequently, family decision-making, unlike prior to the 20th century has become a collective affair between husband and wives. Such development has important consequences for present-day family life. For example, it brings into the frame the need for a renegotiation of spousal power particularly now that the

³⁰⁶ Brian Jory and Carrie L. Yodanis Power, Family Relationships and Marital Relationships *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family*, New York: Macmillan 2003, p. 65.

³⁰⁷ Hill, W. & J. Scanzoni An Approach for Assessing Marital Decision-Making Processes *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 11, 4 pp. 927 - 941, 1982.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 935.

³⁰⁹ Steve Edgell *Middle Class Couples: A Study of Segregation, Domination and Inequality in Marriage* London: Allen & Unwin, 1980, p. 61.

³¹⁰ Michael A. Belch and Laura A. Willis 'Family Decision at the Turn of the Century: Has the Changing Structure of the Households Impacted the Family Decision-making Process? *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* Vol. 2, Issue 2, December 2002, pp. 111-124.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

husband and wife jointly determine the scheduling of family activities and the amount of family income. However, the extent of this reality remains questionable, particularly within traditional societies like the Yoruba.

In taking further the propositions of resource theory, Brian Jory affirms that there has been considerable research support for resource theory in the United States and in Third-World countries.³¹² He cites Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz who conducted a study in the United States and found that when men made substantially more income than their wives, they were more likely to exert greater power in financial decision-making when compared with husbands that made about the same income as their wives.³¹³ Another study conducted in Mexico by R. S. Oropesa found that wives with higher education were equal to their husbands in family power, felt more satisfaction with their influence in the family, and were less likely to be a victim of domestic violence. A study of 113 non-industrialized nations conducted by Gary Lee and Larry Petersen discovered that the more wives contributed to food production/provision, the more power they exerted in marriage. Similarly, Burr *et al.* aver that ‘resources are strongly related to power when norms related to authority are more patriarchal than egalitarian.’³¹⁴

With respect to the Yoruba setting, women are mostly engaged in trading. They are acclaimed today as among the most skilled of West African traders; reputed to have

³¹² Brian Jory and Carrie L. Yodanis Power Family Relationships and Marital Relationships, *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family*, New York: Macmillan, 2003, p. 65.

³¹³ *Ibid*, p. 65.

³¹⁴ Peyton, Reginald M. Pitts, Sarah T. Kamery, Rob H. The family Decision-Making Process: A Review of Significant Consumer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction Models’, *Academy of Marketing Studies*, Dream Catchers Group, Jan. 2004, Vol. 8, Issue 1, pp. 234

a measure of economic autonomy that stems from their trading activities.³¹⁵ Marjorie McIntosh observes that, despite extensive duties³¹⁶ within the family that do not allow most women time to focus and use energy on income-generating activities, they are able to overcome this and still do well in their trade.³¹⁷ She further notes that male economic dominance was limited in most Yoruba sub-group. And this is because women generally keep the income they earn and decide how to spend it themselves, rather than handling it over to their husbands or putting it into some kind of shared family pool.³¹⁸ An important point here is that, even though the Yoruba woman experiences a certain degree of financial empowerment, the extant culture of male dominance continually perpetuates her subjugation within Yoruba society.

The division between the resources of husbands and wives is reinforced by the fact that married women often participate independently in family ceremonies, religious rites, associations and community events, making their own financial contributions.³¹⁹ Thus, it is debatable that Yoruba women do, in some instances, tend to be financially independent of their husbands. Samuel Johnson argues that Yoruba women are more industrious than men, because men appear to have more leisure hours and off days from work while the women have none.³²⁰ Robert A. LeVine takes serious issue with Johnson's view, maintaining that adherence to gender role responsibilities negates the privileging of the contributions of the husband over the

³¹⁵ Mary M. Kritz and Paulina Makinwa-Adebusoye 'Determinants of Women's Decision-Making Authority in Nigeria: The Ethnic Dimension' *Sociological Forum* 14, 3, Sept. 1999, pp. 399- 42.

³¹⁶ Marjorie explains that religious and cultural practices that drew upon a belief in supernatural forces were occasionally used at times when women increased economic prominence or social independence threatened to destabilize familiar gender relationships. See: Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2009, p. 241.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 244.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.111.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.112.

³²⁰ Johnson *History of the Yoruba*, p. 125.

wife or vice visa.³²¹ In essence, the husbands may be the breadwinner, yet their wives are not handicapped. They work hard and provide basic needs for themselves and their children. Therefore, to McIntosh, the issue of men controlling women in Yoruba land hinges mainly on the barriers placed at the doorstep of women by culture rather than resources; no matter what the woman provides, she is still expected to do her husband's bidding.

There are however a number of other voices that differ considerably from the advocates of resource theory. Although some scholars support this view as shown above, some argue that 'increases in the economic resources of a husband resulted either in no significant increase or decrease in his power'.³²² Rodman formulated the normative resource theory as an extension of resource theory. He argues that 'marital power is affected not only by the resource contribution of the parties in the marital dyad, but also by cultural norms, which significantly affect spousal power'.³²³ This view finds a strong correlation within Yoruba culture, where, for example, the wife is expected to address her husband and in-laws as lord, master and owner; '*Oko mi, olowo ori mi*'.³²⁴

Drawing from the above understanding of power relations and family decision-making process, there are some far-reaching possible implications for Yoruba Christian couples in the NWE. Two are identified as follows: First, the influence of

³²¹ Robert A. LeVine 'Sex Roles and Economic Change in Africa Source *Ethnology*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Apr., 1966), pp. 186-193, p.191.

³²² Jory and Yodanis Power, Family and Marital Relationships *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family* p. 68.

³²³ Rodman, H, 'Marital Power and the Theory of Resources in Cultural Context *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* Vol. 3 autumn 1972, pp. 50 - 69.

³²⁴ Martyna, Wendy 'Beyond the He/Man Approach: The Case for Non-sexist Language' *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* Vol. 5.No.3, 1980, pp. 482 - 493.

Yoruba cultural prescriptions of patriarchy and male dominance rather than resources tends to shape the form and nature of men/women or husband/wife relationship. A second and perhaps more fundamental consideration centres on the fact that the relocation of most Yoruba women to the UK, particularly the NWE, has made them significant resource contributors to the family, sometimes breadwinners. So, the previous voiceless state that these women experienced while in Nigeria comes into question as a result of their new financial status. The implications of such financial empowerment are given special attention in chapter four. This thesis argues that such paradigm shifts undoubtedly call for a renegotiation of power relations that will take into cognizance the prevailing social realities in the NWE.

3.6 Power and Decision-making in Yoruba Marriages

Traditionally, scholars view marital decision-making as an indicator of marital power.³²⁵ A substantial body of research exists on individual decision-making but not much has been done on family decision-making.³²⁶ Cynthia Webster asserts that a possible reason for this emphasis on individual rather than on family decision-making might be the belief that the family is generally a poor decision-making unit.³²⁷ Michael Belch and Laura Willis assert that ‘there have been significant

³²⁵ Robert Blood and Donald M. Wolfe *Husbands and Wife: The Dynamics of Married Living*, Glencoe III: Free Press, 1960, p.123.

³²⁶ Patryk Babiar, Cliff A. Robb and Ann Woodward ‘Family Decision Making and Resource Protection Adequacy’ *Journal of Consumer Affairs* Vol. 46, Issue 1, spring 2012, pp. 1 – 36. Michael A. Belch and Laura A. Willis ‘Family Decision at the turn of the century: has the changing structure of the households impacted the family decision-making process?’ *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* Vol. 2, Issue 2, December 2002, pp. 111-124. Peter Wright The Harassed Decision Maker: Time Pressures, Distractions, and the Use of Evidence *Journal of Applied Psychology* 59, 5, Oct 1974, pp. 555 - 568, p. 556.

³²⁷ It is crucial to note that the usage of the term ‘family’ among these scholars represents the nuclear family. However, this differs considerably from the Yoruba understanding; ‘family’ is an umbrella word encompassing every member of the extended family (father, mother, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunties, nephews, cousins and grannies). Within such setting, all major decisions are taken by the most senior male member of the extended family. For further explication of the concept of extended family in Yoruba tradition, see: Cynthia Webster The Meaning and Management of Marital Power: A Review

changes in the roles assumed in the family decision-making process, with the wife gaining more influence in all decision areas'.³²⁸ Mikelle S. Omari-Obafemi contends that 'within the indigenous anatomy of power and art, individuals and groups of women among the Yoruba-speaking people historically maintained positions of great power. They held these positions not only in the domestic arena, but in economics, trade, politics, religion and other social domains as well.'³²⁹ However, the extent to which the assertions of Belch, Willis and Omari-Obafemi can be taken as applicable to Yoruba couples in the NWE raised significant issues for this research.

In unpacking the dynamism of power in Yoruba marriages, the responses from the respondents are significant. Thirty couples were interviewed, selected on the length of their marriages as well as their new experiences of marital-power relations in the NWE. The findings showed that many of the men interviewed were convinced that women are given far greater power within English society than is usually the case in Nigeria.³³⁰ In the words of respondent 1: 'the authorities in this land recognize women more than the men and this you can see by the nature of support given to women by the government to the detriment of men.' Another male respondent stated that: 'women are given upper hand in the UK but in Nigeria, who give monkey

Advances in Consumer Research Vol. 25, 1998, pp. 395 - 399. Oshomha Imoagene *Know Your Country Series the Yoruba of S. Western Nigeria* Ibadan: New Era Publishers, 1990, pp. 40 – 42.

³²⁸ Michael A. Belch and Ann A. Willis, p. 111

³²⁹ Mikelle S. Omari-Obafemi 'An Indigenous Anatomy of Power and Art; a New Look at Yoruba Women in Society and Religion' *Dialectical Anthropology*, 21; pp. 89-98, 1996.

³³⁰ Respondents: 1, 7, 9, and 12. 'The "Fathers for Justice" Group put forward another example that they cited to highlight uneven government policies towards men. Hence one of the continuous and perennial problems in family sociology in recent years has been the discussion of conjugal power relations' particularly in cross- cultural work (William T. Liu, Ira W. Hutchison, Lawrence K. Hong, 'Conjugal Power and Decision Making: A Methodological Note on Cross-Cultural Study of the Family', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (Jul., 1998), pp. 84 - 98.

banana.’³³¹ These remarks confirmed the opinion of Dorcas Akintunde and Helen Labeodan, that men accuse women of trying to mislead other people by claiming that they (women) are being oppressed, while in the real sense they (women) are involved with ‘un-African’ practices.³³² Ironically, Akintunde and Labeodan, who are African women, maintain that:

African women cannot prove that they are oppressed or violated. After all, there is no discrimination against them on the basis of their sex in our culture and religious practices. Some of them are only trying to imbibe western practices, which are un-African. In so doing, they will succeed in misleading others’.³³³

These scholars further accentuate the male notion of women’s economic and religious power, while repudiating the view that there are no cultural barriers or social structures inimical to women. Although this view certainly does not reflect the consensus among Yoruba woman in England, the idea of ‘un-African practices’ is significant. A typical example of such ‘un-African practice’ was cited by one of my respondents, who stated that when he and his wife had some misunderstanding, the police were called in and he, as the man, was subsequently sent out of the house without due process to ascertain who was wrong.³³⁴

Three other male respondents queried the rationale behind the decision of giving women custody of the children while the man is left alone when there is a family

³³¹ Interview excerpt from respondent 12, the expression ‘who give monkey banana’ does not imply that women are seen as monkeys but used as a metaphor; denoting that an individual cannot punch beyond her/his weight.

³³² Dorcas Akintunde and Helen Labeodan *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa*, Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer Press, p. 11, 2002.

³³³ *Ibid*, p. 12.

³³⁴ This was described as the normal practice of the law enforcement agency in the United Kingdom to bring about relative peace in the family most especially in the situation where children are involved. However, back in Yoruba land, the house belongs to the man; hence, in the event of marital breakdown, the woman usually leaves to her father/family.

breakdown or separation.³³⁵ According to Respondent 1: ‘even though the man continues to look after his children, he may not even be allowed to see them whenever trouble breaks out.’ A number of the men interviewed argued that such un-African practices, coupled with the financial support given to single mothers, encourage women to be disrespectful to their husbands and eventually to throw them out of the house at the slightest provocation.³³⁶ However, there are some Yoruba women, who in common with Patti Lather, vehemently argued that the so-called un-African practices only encourage an uneven relation of dominance, which, in turn, perpetuates an anachronistic restriction of the woman.³³⁷ Consequently, when couples from such a conservative traditional background relocate to the NWE, then a conflict of interest and power renegotiation becomes inevitable.

An important point to note is that, given the cultural background of the Yoruba couples, most of their marriages have become problematic because of their inability to strike a critical balance between their original roles in Nigeria and the social realities and experiences on the ground in England. Put differently, many of them could be said to be in a state of cultural limbo or a dilemma, dangling between Nigerian and British cultures. Bernadette Gray-Little pioneered a comprehensive study on the place of power in the marital relationship between black couples.³³⁸

This work is significant because several researches have been carried out on family

³³⁵ Mothers tend to appeal more to the court for three basic reasons. The first one is the societal influences that say a child receives better care with their mother. Secondly, the court tends to view both the mother and child as dependants, while the father is seen as an independent and lastly, women are generally viewed as vulnerable and thus more likely to receive sympathy compared to men.

³³⁶ There have been reported cases of women throwing their husbands’ belongings out of the family house during their times of crises. For example, in my interviews, Respondent 1, 3, 4 and 7 claimed that their wives threw them out their property.

³³⁷ Patti Lather. *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy within the Postmodern* London: Routledge, 1991, pp. xv-9.

³³⁸ Bernadette Gray-Little Marital Quality and Power Processes among Black Couples *Journal of Marriage and Family* 44, 3, Aug., 1982, pp. 633-646, p. 633.

and decision-making among white people but such cannot be said about their black counterparts.³³⁹ Although Gray-Little's work was carried out in a different context, her findings aligned with reports from the male respondents I interviewed. Together both sources suggest that a higher degree of marital inequality exists among black couples compared to their white counterparts.

The beginning of formal research into power and family decision-making is traceable to the work of Herbst.³⁴⁰ Despite the fact that the study was done in the United States among black and white Americans, one can still locate some fundamental factors relevant to marriages among Yoruba couples living in the NWE. For example, issues of who makes the final decision in the house and to what extent should the wife offer financial contributions are common to both. Phyllis Hallenbeck opines that, culturally, the man has been given a position of prominence that makes him dominate.³⁴¹ She notes that 'the cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity, the legal tradition of husband as family head and the Judeo-Christian concept of the superiority of the husband are the factors contributing to this reality'.³⁴² Consistent with Hallenbeck, H. B. Danesh observes that the ways women are treated in the family have been frequently 'justified in the context of cultural norms, religious beliefs and unfounded scientific theories and assumptions'.³⁴³ He

³³⁹ Roger J. Baran Cultural Role Expectations, Husband-Wife Resources and Competence: Their Effect on Decision-making Influence in Black and White Families in USA, *AFBE Journal* 3, 1, June 2010, pp. 128-144, p.129.

³⁴⁰ George P. Moschs and Roy C. Moore Decision-making among the Young: A Socialization Perspective' *Journal of Consumer Research*, 6, 2, Sept. 1979, p. 39 – 50.

³⁴¹ Phyllis N. Hallenbeck An Analysis of Power Dynamics in Marriage *Journal of Marriage and Family* 28, 2, May 1966, p. 202.

³⁴² *Ibid*, p. 202.

³⁴³ H. B. Danesh The Violence Free Family: Building Block of Peaceful Civilization' United State Agency for International Development, Ottawa, Canada: Bahá'í Studies Publications, 1995, viii, p. 51

asserts that the great majority of families in all societies and cultures have been under fortification of male dominance and power.³⁴⁴ He further submits that:

Male power has been, and still is, exercised in respect to all aspects of the female family members' lives controlling their educational rights and privileges, their sexual wishes and preferences, their social opportunities and status, their economic well-being and independence, their personal freedoms and responsibilities, and their spiritual standing and aspirations.³⁴⁵

The above view seems to justify the cultural belief among Africans that a man is or must be in charge of the family. Conversely, such view is controversial and thus remains unacceptable in the current British socio-political climate, where democratic considerations and equality underpin interpersonal relationships.³⁴⁶ The point here is that, even within traditional cultures, power relations between couples is both complex and problematic, hence the question: who has power in the Yoruba family, and how are decisions made?

In contrast to the Yoruba tradition, men and women relationship is more egalitarian in the NWE;³⁴⁷ less based on predefined cultural gender roles, given the matriarchal structure of families. This carries grave implications for Yoruba couples, because each has to renegotiate its relationship outside the supporting structure and norms of

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 17.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 3.

³⁴⁶ The various legislations that were enacted to address/enhance women's right in the UK have been highlighted in footnote 319 however for further reading see: Women and work, <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/women/women-work/accessed>, September, 2012.

³⁴⁷ The Office of National Statistics cites a number of legal Acts that impact the lives of women in the UK; a few of these include: 1970 – Equal Pay Act; 1975 - Sex Discrimination Act; 1975 Employment Prosecution Act; 2002 – act on Equal Opportunity for Men and Women; 2008 – Lone Parent Income Support Change; 2010 – Increase of Women's State Pension Age, see: Great Britain. Department for Work and Pensions, A Sustainable State Pension: When the State Pension Age Will Increase to 66, Britain: Crown Copyright, 2010.

Yoruba society. For example, many Yoruba women relocated first to England solely because of their professional background and later brought their husband over to the UK because of their immigration status. Evidence from my interviews indicated that a number of the women fell within the category of being the main visa applicant.³⁴⁸ Such a development inadvertently reduces the woman's dependence on her husband, and brings into focus the issue of power and control; this will be further teased out in the next section on Yoruba marriage in chapter four.

3.7 Significant Dialoguing Partners

Existing scholarship on migration and marriage, with special reference to marital instability has shown that nothing has been written explicitly about Yoruba couples living in the NWE. Nonetheless, research carried out in parallel fields by Sheba Mariam George, Ouseph Thomas Puthussery and Toyin Falola helped to inform the approach I took.

Sheba George's sociological research highlights inequalities among underserved migrants populations in the United State of America. As an Indian immigrant to the USA, she continually faced the same difficulties which migrants experienced in relation to class, hierarchy and gender issues. She studied their conflicts, and wrote her thesis on: 'When Women Comes First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration'.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ As part of this research, the researcher interviewed a number of Yoruba families from the major Nigerian churches (Baptist, Alive Believers' Redeemed Christian Church of God and Winners' Chapel) in the North West. The finding suggested that over 70% of Yoruba men came into England through the women's professional platform.

³⁴⁹ Sheba Miriam George *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration*. California: University of California Press, Ltd., 2005.

George examined how the Indian traditional power dynamics between husband and wife become unsettled, as a result of female-led migration. In her words, she queries ‘what happens when wife comes first and the husband follow later, when wife are the main bread-winners and husband are secondary earners. How resilient is the traditional hierarchy in the family in the face of challenges created by female-led migration?

She found out that intercultural contacts could be both enriching and enslaving. On the one hand, members of both migrant and host communities have opportunities to learn, to foster better understanding, trust and tolerate each other. On the other hand, cultural assimilation can cause a fear of losing one’s own ancestral cultural identity and sense of belonging. This fear is particularly true when it challenges male hierarchy and masculinity and seeks to foster freedom. Although I was dealing with a different ethnic group in a different geographic context, many issues raised by George resonated with my own findings.

George’s work resembles my research on three points; first, our studies drew significantly from ethnographically informed fieldwork. The research tool of participant observation played a key role in generating raw data in both studies. Second, both researchers are insiders to their respective co-migrant communities. At the same time, they are aware of the limitations such as insider status could have on an objective research. Third, both studies examine the vexing questions of power relations among migrant families.

The particularity of my study lies in my suggested solution. George proposed that the husband should accept the changed situation of their wives in their new setting and find amicable ways forward; by contrast, my study proposes a re- negotiation of power within the framework of PIP, that engages both parties.

Thomas Puthussery's social-theological research focused on marriage within the Syro-Malabar Catholic community in Liverpool. The increase number of marital breakdown within the community prompted this research. The desire among Syro-Malabar couples to maintain their traditional patterns of family relationship comes into conflict with the challenges and pressures within the prevailing English culture in the UK. Consequently, Puthussey's research is an attempt to inform a pastoral support of marriages in this community.

Puthussery's work resembles my research as we both share common features in terms of our focus on a migrating faith community, sample population (married couples), methodology and professional background (ministers of the church). Our works also agree on issues like power and gender role reversal, identity and their impact on marital harmony. In a diaspora context, Puthussey's work and my work highlighted in equal measure the fears of husbands loosing their manliness both at home and in public. Similarly, common to both sets of findings was the men's fear of becoming (or being) legally and economically dependent on their wives, and thereby losing their sense of dignity and affirmation of their manhood.

However, my work distinguishes itself from Puthussey's work on five main fronts: First, in spite of the similarities of our interviewees and their concerns, Puthussey's

work and I approached issues differently. His theoretical starting point was grounded theory while mine by contrast examined these issues through the lenses of thematic approach. This allowed me to study recurring themes that emerged from my fieldwork data.

Second, Puthussey studied marriage and migration issues from the perspective of an unmarried priest of the Syro-Malabar church. He himself did not regard his celibate status as a limitation within his study of marital concerns. He was studying a reality to which he was ethnically and culturally an insider, but experientially an outsider. I, on the other hand a married pastor of a baptist congregation, find myself as an insider on all counts.

Third, the criteria for selection of interviewees differed between Puthussery and myself, in that I restricted my sample to couples that had already been married for at least two years in Nigeria, and who then spent at least five years in NWE. These criteria's allowed me to compare and contrast the marital experiences of the couples in their traditional home setting in Nigeria and their experiences as settled diaspora families in the NWE. It also helped me to engage with my interviewees at a deeper level and for a longer period.

Four, Puthussey's work does not elaborate the issue of identity of the parents in relation to children in the NWE. Normally, Nigerian children request their father for permission to undertake any significant decision, but knowing the conflicts between the parents, they approach their mother for any major decisions; hence sidelining the father. This situation deepens the crisis. My work has examined/ discussed this issue.

Five, while Puthussey's work deals with confession and counselling in the church, I propose to take it out of the church into a confident place, for couples to reason out their solution.

Finally, Toyin Falola, a Nigerian historian and professor of African Studies' work throw some light on the role of Yoruba women with reference to pre- colonial and British Colonia Nigeria. He underlined women's capacity to attain the highest leadership function as '*iyalode*'. And this chieftaincy title gives her significant privilege and power in the local administration and governance. The example of this woman inspires other women to improve their position within and outside of their family.

The reality captured by Falola resonates in the NWE, where majority of the women are economically dominant as the primary breadwinners and thus wield a considerable amount of power in the family. However, his analysis of women does not apply to my research greatly because these women have never left their ancestral place and have not experienced social dislocation, and all the challenges that go with it.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW: II

Traditional Marriage Pattern among the Yoruba

4.1 Introduction

The Yoruba concept of reality has its genesis in the traditional beliefs of the people. 'The themes of these beliefs are for the most part articulated through myths, folklore, proverbs, and symbolism that are embedded in *Odu Ifa*'.³⁵⁰ These form the basis of Yoruba reflections on marriage. Marriage is complex and centres on the relationship between two consenting adults of the opposite sex with the full approval by their families.³⁵¹ A number of scholars have examined the concept of marriage among Africans.³⁵² Their work has significantly contributed to a better understanding of both African and Yoruba marriage patterns. The review and subsequent discussions in this section is predicated on the premise that Yoruba culture provides a sieve for a better understanding of marriage patterns and related issues; it further contributes to the wider contemporary discourse on marriage and family life.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ The word 'Ifa' refers to the system of divination, while the verses of the literary corpus are known as the 'Odu Ifa'. For further explications please see: Abimbola, W. *The Yoruba Concept of Human Personality. La Notion persnonne en Afrique Noire*, Colloque Internationaux de Centra de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris; Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977, No. 544, pp. 73 - 89.

³⁵¹ Abe G. O. *The Jewish and Yoruba Social Institution of Marriage: A Comparative Study Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* Vol. 21, Issue one, 1998, pp. 3 – 18.

³⁵² Bergsma, H. *Tales Tiv tell*. Ibadan: Heinemann Press, 1969, p. 9; Oyeronke Olajubu, *A Social-Cultural Analysis of Celibacy among the Yoruba: Oyo Alafin's Servants as a Case Study*, www.unilorin.edu.ng/publications/olademoo/OYERONKE accessed on 21st June 2014; J. D. Y. Peel *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003.

³⁵³ The Yoruba believe that the primary purpose of marriage is sustaining their race through legitimate and responsible procreation. See: Y. A. B. Olatunji *Ijinle Asa Yoruba* Ibadan: Suntos Intercontinental Services, 2006, p. 7.

4.2 Marriage: Pattern, Purpose and Process

Literature on the Yoruba people, in common with other traditional societies, is replete with the idea that marriage is an essential part of adult life for men and women within Yoruba society.³⁵⁴ Bankole Oni observes that the institution of marriage has undergone considerable changes as a result of contacts with Europeans, Christianity, and Islam as well as through the process of modernization.³⁵⁵ As an institution, it is intrinsically woven into the fabric of the Yoruba culture. Andrew A. Kyomo asserts that, to understand a culture, it is important to understand its core practices with particular reference to marriage.³⁵⁶ Oni further notes that there are different variations and evolving nature of marriage practices among the Yoruba. For example, within the traditional setting, different marriage processes operate, depending on cultural and family background.³⁵⁷ To Waruta and Kinoti, the institution of the family is founded on marriage.³⁵⁸ Paul's injunction, in Ephesians 5: 22 – 26, stresses love and mutual submission between couples, but such considerations do not necessarily form the basis for marital relationship in the Yoruba culture.

The Yoruba place significant premium on marriage owing to the desire for children, to keep the family name, and more importantly the belief that 'Olodumare' commands it.³⁵⁹ Traditionally, people are expected to marry at a certain age with the consent of

³⁵⁴ N. A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba* Ibadan; Ibadan University Press, 1970, p. 80.

³⁵⁵ Bankole Oni Contemporary Courtship and Marriage Practices among the Yoruba *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 145 - 160, p. 146.

³⁵⁶ Andrew A. Kyomo *Marriage and Family in African Christianity* Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2004, p. 83.

³⁵⁷ Bankole Oni Contemporary Courtship and Marriage Practices among the Yoruba, p. 147.

³⁵⁸ Douglas W. Waruta and Hannah W. Kinoti, eds., *Pastoral Care in African Christianity* Kenya: Acton Publishers, 1994, p. 88.

³⁵⁹ It must be clearly emphasized that religion is a very important subset of the Yoruba culture. Since there are no people without religious beliefs, so the systems of worships and rituals have always been an integral part of Yoruba culture. The Yoruba people identify Olodumare the Supreme Deity, to

their parents and often the wider extended family. Fadipe points out that ‘it is unusual for a man or woman who has reached the age of marriage to remain single; it is against the mores of the Yoruba.’³⁶⁰ Hence, ‘men get married even when they are sexually impotent in order to enhance their social status, to preserve the family honour and ensure that their domestic needs are met.’³⁶¹

According to Olugboyega Alaba, the importance and relevance of marriage among others is underscored by this popular Yoruba folk song:

Olorun ma je n sadanikangbele o
Olorun ma je n sadanikangbele o
adanikanje, adanikanmu
adanikan-gbe 'nuu-palo-bi-eranko
Olorun ma je n sadanikangbele o

Meaning:

God, forbid it that I live alone in my house.
 God, forbid it that I live alone in my house.
 Eating alone, drinking alone.
 Living alone in my living room like an animal.
 God, forbid it that I live alone in my house.³⁶²

Writing in the same vein, Nathaniel Fadipe asserts that ‘marriage is held very sacred and in very high esteem ... it is the same Edenic marriage between Adam and Eve that is repeated or reenacted among the Yoruba people.’³⁶³ Alaba’s and Fadipe’s views capture the meaning, value, place and centrality of marriage to the Yoruba. To an outsider, the view that being alone is compared to living as an animal is incomprehensible; it highlights how

whom all questions or phenomena beyond human understanding are directed yet who owes no one explanation. He is called God in English, Ubagidi/Allah in Hausa and Chineke in Igbo, all three major Nigerian nationalities.

³⁶⁰ Fadipe, *Sociology of Yoruba*, p. 81.

³⁶¹ Marjorie Keniston McIntosh *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009, p. 83.

³⁶² Olugboyega Alaba Understanding Sexuality in the Yoruba Culture Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre <http://www.arsrc.org/downloads/uhsss/alaba.pdf> Accessed 12th July 2014.

³⁶³ Fadipe, N. A. *The Yoruba Philosophy, Myth and Religion*, 2001, pp. 47- 48.

individualism is abhorred while communality is celebrated. Many of the rituals involved in marriage are symbolic; 'it is not merely an alliance, a bond, or covenant between two individuals; man and woman, but also an alliance between two families or communities.'³⁶⁴ This serves as a powerful force that strengthens the nuclear family, together ensuring the stability of marriage even when and where partners were ill suited.

4.3 Purpose of Marriage among the Yoruba

Before examining the processes that are involved in Yoruba marriage, it will be relevant to discuss why marriage is central to the people. According to Oyeronke, 'marriage is seen as a rhythm of life,'³⁶⁵ it accords an individual an enhanced social status as well as responsibilities. Drawing from the literature and my fieldwork ethnographic study, I identified three main purposes of marriage: procreation and lineage continuity,³⁶⁶ sexual gratification and companionship, and the need to meet domestic responsibilities.³⁶⁷ Therefore, within Yoruba culture, conjugal sex is not necessarily for gratification but seen as the means to guarantee lineage continuity; hence, it is the duty of every adult member of the community.

Olugboyega Alaba avers that 'the primary purpose of marriage is sustaining the Yoruba race through legitimate and responsible procreation.'³⁶⁸ By fulfilling such function, one is considered responsible and normal, hence the community feels obliged to participate in the socializing process of every member by establishing

³⁶⁴ Benedict Etafo and Hilary O. Okeke *Marriage and the Family in Nigeria* Lagos: Canon law society of Nigeria, 1993, p. 9.

³⁶⁵ Oyeronke A Social-Cultural Analysis of Celibacy among the Yoruba: Oyo Alafin's Servants as a Case Study, www.unilorin.edu.ng/publications/olademoo/OYERONKE accessed on 21 October 2010.

³⁶⁶ Interview with: Mr. Fadare during a traditional marriage ceremony at Ibadan on the 10/10/ 2012. The researcher attended this ceremony within the capacity of a participant observer; with issues of ethical consideration put in place.

³⁶⁷ Marjorie Keniston McIntosh *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change*, p. 83.

³⁶⁸ Olugboyega Alaba *Understanding Sexuality in the Yoruba Cultural*, p. 4.

rewards and sanctions, as they deemed appropriate. Consequently, the community frowns at individuals that refuse to marry; such persons are regarded as abnormal or sick.

There is no place for civil partnership and sexual promiscuity in the Yoruba culture. Sex outside marriage either in the form of adultery or immorality is strictly forbidden, laden with serious repercussions and consequences. Adewale writes: ‘the kinship structure of Yoruba society makes adultery a crime not only against the husband as an individual but also against those corporate bodies with whom the husband is in relation (....) any act of unfaithfulness in the matrimonial life of the couple is punishable by supernatural Beings’.³⁶⁹ Similarly, ‘she destroys the members of the household of the husband, she destroys the members of the household of the concubine thereafter she destroys herself, and goes on the far journey to heaven. So declares the Oracle to the adulterous woman who is a servant of death’.³⁷⁰

To discourage the practice of multiple sexual relationships, ‘traditional control prescribes premarital chastity to preserve female virginity at the time of marriage; this results in total exclusion of female adolescents from any discussion pertaining to sex.’³⁷¹ Against these backdrops, marriage is overwhelmingly embraced as a means for male sexual satisfaction rather than for companionship. The idea of companionship among traditional Yoruba couples is not merely restricted to the husband and wife relationship but extends to their various peers/age groups. That

³⁶⁹ Adewale S. Adewole Crime and African Traditional Religion *Orita* XXVI 1994, pp. 54- 66.

³⁷⁰ Moses O. Ogunsola Abstinence from Pre-Marital Sex: A Precursor to Quality Relationship and Marital Stability in Subsequent Marriage in Nigeria Society International Journal of Psychological Studies Vol. 4, No. 2, June 2012, pp. 228 - 234.

³⁷¹ A. S. Jegede Gender and Health Analysis of Sexual Behaviour in South Western Nigeria *African Journal of Reproduction Health* Vol. 7, No, 1, April 2003, pp. 63- 70.

polygamy is encouraged and practised will, in essence, suffocate the idea of marriage companionship as conceived within the Judeo-Christian/Western thought.

4.4 The Processes in Yoruba Marriage

Yoruba marriage is robust and extremely elaborate both in essence and celebration. It can be described as a process, consisting of various stages, actors, facilitators as well as the actual people/families that are involved.³⁷² An early intimation (*ifojusode*), a formal betrothal (*idana*) and the actual marriage ceremony (*Igbeyawo*) are the different stages to negotiate prior to any recognized conjugal union.³⁷³ Two out of these three processes ('*Idana*' and '*Igbeyawo*') were comprehensively observed by the researcher, as part of his ethnographic fieldwork, but the nature of '*ifojusode*' does not lend it to such observation because of its subjective nature.

4.4.1 Early Intimation (*Ifojusode*)

On this important issue there are many customs, methods and procedures. As a general Yoruba tradition, seeking a partner for a young man does not arise until after puberty. During this period, it is usually the duty of his immediate family, especially female relatives, to search for a suitable wife for him.³⁷⁴ Although they have unrestricted freedom in making any choice on behalf of their brother, issues of convenience, with regard to distance, and sociological compatibility are crucial in reaching their final decision. Mbiti observes that there are situations in which parents arrange marriages for their children, and in some cases, such

³⁷² Fadipe *Sociology of Yoruba*, p. 84.

³⁷³ Y. A. N Olatunji *Ijinle Asa Yoruba* Ibadan: Suntos Books, p.1 - 20.

³⁷⁴ Damilola Ogundoro *Marriage Customs in Yorubaland African and Middle Eastern Culture*, December 2013.

arrangement is done even before the children are born.³⁷⁵ Johnson adds that girls are often marked out from childhood as intended for a particular young man, with or without her knowledge.³⁷⁶ Fadipe equally confirms this practice and places the age of betrothal for a girl to be about age ten.³⁷⁷ However, the above propositions on arranged marriage is fast losing momentum in contemporary times, as indicated by Judith Byfield,³⁷⁸ and consistent with the researcher's fieldwork findings. Nowadays, when individuals meet as potential marriage partners, even before giving their parents the chance for background check, some irreversible commitments would have already been made. In other words, parents are no longer the sole decision-makers in terms of whom their children marry. But it is maintained in the literature that marriage between blood relatives are forbidden in Yoruba tradition.³⁷⁹

4.4.2 Formal Betrothal ('*Idana*')

During the betrothal period, which is usually 10-15 years, the girl refers to the man as '*oko mi*' (my husband), while he, in turn, calls her '*iyawo mi*' (my wife). She is not permitted to meet or speak to her fiancé or to members of his family, except among some Yoruba tribes/groups that allow the groom to pay an extra fee: *owo ibasoro* (money for speaking).³⁸⁰ However, this is not a very widespread custom; for the most part, traditionally engaged people did not overtly interact at all. The bride price, which is sometimes referred to as dowry, dower, earnest, settlement, indemnity

³⁷⁵ John Mbiti *Love and marriage in Africa*, Singapore, Longman Group Limited, 1973, p. 50

³⁷⁶ Samuel Johnson *The History of the Yorubas* Lagos: CSS Bookshops, 2009, p. 135.

³⁷⁷ Fadipe *Sociology of Yoruba*, p.70.

³⁷⁸ Judith Byfield Women, Marriage, Divorce and the Emerging Colonial State in Abeokuta (Nigeria) *Canadian Journal of African Studies* Vol. 30, No. 1, 1996, pp. 32 - 51.

³⁷⁹ Alade Adetunji *Alarede* Ibadan: Onibonoje Press and Books Ltd, 1996, p. 5. And Moses O. Ogunsola 'Abstinence from Pre-Marital Sex: A Precursor to Quality Relationship and Marital Stability in Subsequent Marriage in Nigerian Society' *International Journal of Psychological Studies* Vol. 4, No. 2, June 2012, pp. 228 – 234.

³⁸⁰ Akinloye Ojo Yoruba Omo Odùduwà: Papers on Yoruba People, Language, and Culture, <http://www.uga.edu/aflang/YORUBA/ODUDUWA.htm> accessed August 2014.

or bride wealth,³⁸¹ is usually paid in two instalments: the *ijowun* and *idana*. The *ijowun* consists of pepper, kola, beer, wine, gin, bitter kola, and honey. It is paid when the girl's parents accept the man for their daughter, and it formally seals the engagement. While referring to bride price, S. T. Ola-Akande says that this ceremony is usually a prolonged exercise and is made very interesting by singing and elaborate presentation of gifts.³⁸²

The second instalment, the *idana*, includes similar items as the *ijowun* except for the inclusion of some wrappers. The bride-price could also be paid in three instalments: the engagement sealing, 'love money' paid before the girl's third year of puberty, when she becomes marriageable, and 'wife money' paid just before the wedding.³⁸³ The bride price serves several important purposes; it is symbolic, an initiating and naturalizing exercise that establishes a woman's sense of belonging to her new family.³⁸⁴ Consequently, from the traditional perspective, the bride price is the most important factor in the event of divorce. Hence, to divorce her husband, a woman must return the bride price. It legally establishes the husband as the father of her children.³⁸⁵ Given the premium that is laid on '*idana*', divorce is unpopular among the Yoruba; a dissatisfied wife could only leave her husband (as a last resort) insofar as the dowry is paid back.

³⁸¹ Aylward Shorter *African Culture and the Christian Church* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973, p. 167

³⁸² S.T. Ola Akande *Marriage and Family Life in the Nigerian Society* Ibadan: Daystar press, 2004, p. 50.

³⁸³ Johnson *History of the Yorubas*, p. 136.

³⁸⁴ Ethnographic fieldwork interview with Mr Fadare on March 2013 at Ibadan indicated that payment of bride price is central to every traditional marriage among the Yoruba; hence its absence negates the legitimacy of any conjugal tie. The payment and witnesses put the seal of indissolubility on the entire transaction. Therefore, contrary to the view that the payment of bride price is a form of selling or enrichment, the fact is that it goes beyond the mere act of commerce.

³⁸⁵ Oluwafemi Okunola *Theocentric Feminism: An African Theological Perspective of Authentic Womanhood* PhD Thesis Nigerian Theological Seminary Ogbomosho, 2002, p. 138. And Amaury P. Talbot *the Peoples of Southern Nigeria a Sketch of the History, ethnology and languages with an Abstract of the 1921 Census* London: Frank Cass Vol. 4, 1969

4.4.3 Marriage Ceremony (*Igbeyawo*)

Traditional marriage ceremony is the climax of a process that started with early intimation. The terms or means in which it is undertaken is guided by Yoruba native law and custom but with certain variations, depending on the sub-group.³⁸⁶ Literally, the term *igbeyawo* implies ‘carrying the bride to the husband’s house’.³⁸⁷ Normally, traditional marriage lasts for about one week and preparation begins from Monday; the Yoruba believe that the creation day was Thursday (*Ojo Asesedaye*). Therefore, given that marriage in a sense ‘is the beginning of life for the couples,’ it is thus logical that this is the preferred day for the ceremony. The wedding day is the day that the woman goes to her husband’s house; she performs a traditional song called *Ekun Iyawo*³⁸⁸ for her family. Through this song, she thanks her family for her upbringing and wishes them farewell, for she is going to start her own home.³⁸⁹

As part of the ceremony, she receives prayer, advice and best wishes from her family. When this party finishes, she leaves in the evening for her husband’s house, accompanied by some of her friends and wives within the family. On this occasion, she will be carried shoulder high by the groom’s friends while her peers sing along on the way to her husband’s house.³⁹⁰ According to tradition, she must not meet her husband at home on her arrival; thus, the husband goes out of the house with the intention of meeting the bride on his return. Prior to the bride’s entrance to her husband’s house, her legs must be washed with cold water by one of the senior wives

³⁸⁶O. Aigbovo *Introduction to Nigerian Legal System* Akure, Nigeria: Sylva Publication, 2000, p. 47.

³⁸⁷Diedre L. Badejo Gender Ideology, Global Africa and the Challenges for Pan-African Studies in the 21st Century *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.1, no.10, November 2007, pp. 5 - 18.

³⁸⁸See: Appendix 6.

³⁸⁹Jens Kreinath Imagining Religious Weeping: Weeping in the Religious Imagination, *Current Anthropology* Vol. 47, No. 5 October 2006, pp. 879 – 884.

³⁹⁰Fadipe *Sociology of Yoruba*, p. 92.

in her husband's family. This washing of legs is symbolic and vital, invoking prosperity, cleanliness and peaceful transition into a new life. Subsequently, the bride is asked to smash the calabash with which the water was brought. It is believed that the number of pieces that the calabash breaks into shows the number of children she will bear for her husband.³⁹¹

Another aspect of the marriage ceremony, though very private, is what happens on the first night between the couple. That same day, after the ceremony, the man and the woman 'mate'. This is expected to be their first sexual contact since they began their relationship. The practice is to confirm if the bride is a virgin: if the man finds out that the woman is a virgin, then he stains a handkerchief with her blood. He carries a calabash filled with fresh palm wine and takes along with him a matchbox filled with matchsticks to the wife's family as a means of appreciation.³⁹²

Concerned members of the community are keen to see the outcome of this bridal night. If the woman is not a virgin, her husband comes disappointed with an empty calabash and an empty matchbox; then smashes it on the ground at the home of his wife's parents, saying: '*omo te fun mi korofo ni*' (the daughter you gave me is empty). This act brings ridicule and shame to the wife's family.³⁹³

Subsequently, all he has given to the wife's parents is expected to be returned. This was a strong tradition, a precursor for considering whether a Yoruba marriage was successful in the pre-colonial era. However, these descriptions best portray the

³⁹¹ J. Lorand Matony The Kings Male-Order Bride: the Modern making of a Yoruba Priest *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* Vol. 810, No. 1 Dec. 2006, pp. 381 – 396.

³⁹² Olugboyega Alaba Understanding Sexuality in the Yoruba Culture Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre <http://www.arsrc.org/downloads/uhsss/alaba.pdf> Accessed August 2014.

³⁹³ Femi Adelegan *Nigeria Leading Light of the Gospel; Revolutionary in Worldwide Christianity*, Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press, 2013, p.407.

typical traditional Yoruba marriage ceremony, which in the contemporary times has witnessed significant changes owing to diverse socio-cultural contacts.

4.5 Different Types of Marriages among the Yoruba

With regard to marriage practices that are endorsed among the Yoruba, available data suggest that an individual's association with either any of the two main types of marriage (monogamy and polygamy)³⁹⁴ is reflective of social changes. While commenting on marriage, Samuel Johnson delineates four distinct forms:

Traditional betrothal marked by the exchange of dowry and service by the husband; levirate, the inheritance of a widow by a male relative of the deceased husband; mutual consent between a woman and man in a union that was recognized by the man's family (usually involving widows who refused to remarry a deceased husband's relative, war captives, slaves or redeemed slaves); and gift marriage in which neither dowry or service was exchanged.³⁹⁵

Johnson's analysis captures different marriage practices and they predate the various contacts and interactions between the Yoruba and the colonial masters and or missionaries from North America and Britain. The fact that the time of Johnson's work was in the early nineteen century reinforces his position. Therefore, in the light of the nature and influence of social changes, Oni's two categories offer a more appropriate view of the reality on ground. Taking this argument further, Marjorie McKintosh acknowledges the popularity of polygamy during the colonial period. She buttresses her view by citing a study undertaken on Yoruba marriage pattern from 1950 to 51. The result showed that about sixty-three percent of all households were

³⁹⁴Bankole Oni Contemporary Courtship and Marriage Practices among the Yoruba *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, p. 151- 163, p. 155.

³⁹⁵Samuel Johnson *History of the Yorubas*, p. 113.

polygamous; the average number of wives per married man was 2.2%³⁹⁶. On the same note, while Islam appeared to be more sympathetic with polygamy, the apathetic stance of evangelical Christian missionaries hand, proved inimical to their overall conversion thrust. Hence, the emergence of African Initiated Churches (Aladura and others), which were accommodative of members marrying more than one wife.³⁹⁷

While other forms of marriage practices, such as woman-to-woman marriage, a woman married to two men at the same time and levirate might have been associated with Yoruba culture, practices should be better seen from two fronts. First, they are products of the past and thus relegated as footnote of history within the present Yoruba social setting. Second, the combined influences of Islam and Christianity, urbanization, women's economic independence, modernity alongside the array of social changes, have resulted in new thinking on marriage. The next discussion, therefore examines polygamy and monogamy as the two major types of marriage practised among the Yoruba.

4.5.1 Polygamy

Certain main features characteristically distinguish Yoruba society. Although these may be identified among other subcultures within the Nigerian and African cultural landscapes, the association of such features is so inherent that the ideas of the Yoruba cannot be fully conceptualized without them. Such features include tribal marks, dress/fashion style, language and marriage

³⁹⁶McIntosh *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change* p. 98.

³⁹⁷Rotimi Omotoye Christianity and Educational Development in Ilorin Metropolis 1855-1995 A *Journal of Religious Studies* (JORS) University of Uyo, Vol. 1, No 1 pp.104 - 117.

forms.³⁹⁸ Familusi observes that Yoruba society is endemically polygamous.³⁹⁹

To Edewor:

Yoruba culture, as many African cultures, allows or even encourages men to contract polygamous marriage and a man who engages in extra marital relations does not receive general condemnation as a woman does. He might even be privately hailed for his behaviour. On the other hand, not only would such an act by married woman receive wide condemnation but would in fact be ruthlessly and severely punished.⁴⁰⁰

Polygamy is defined as a 'form of marriage whereby a man marries more than one wife at the same time'.⁴⁰¹ In other words, the practice of one man, many wives is both traditionally and socially acceptable among the Yoruba people. Peel points out that within Yoruba tradition, men are permitted to have more than one wife.⁴⁰²

To Ubrurhe, 'polygamy is universe in Africa. Kings, nobles and rich men have large numbers of wives and even the common people sometimes have two or three wives.'⁴⁰³ Marjorie McIntosh asserts that the propensity to be polygamous is rife in more traditional societies and among people with limited Western contact.⁴⁰⁴ A more radical view sees polygamy as one of the most cherished of

³⁹⁸ P.A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*,; J. O. Omosade & P. A. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion* (rev. ed.), Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd, 2005, p. 33.

³⁹⁹ O. O. Familusi African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 5, no.1, March 2012, pp. 299 - 313.

⁴⁰⁰ Edewor P. A. The Influence of Religion on Contraception and Fertility in Dopamu P. A. (ed.) *Science and Religion in the Service of Humanity* Ilorin (LSI) and (NASTRANS), 2006, pp. 375 - 376, p. 375.

⁴⁰¹ Elizabeth Jackson *Illustrated Dictionary of Culture* Delhi: Lotus Press, 2006, p.159.

⁴⁰² Peel *Religious Encounter*, p. 75.

⁴⁰³ Ubrurhe, J. O. Marriage and African Christianity: the Issue of Polygamy in Urhobo Land. *Coping with Culture*, 1999, Vol. 55, p.8.

⁴⁰⁴ McIntosh *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change*, p. 99.

the Yoruba ancestral customs and that its popularity hinges primarily on economic and socio-cultural reasons.

The nature of marriage as conceived from the cultural perspective as one for economic purposes and procreation rather than for mutual support and companionship lends it to polygamy. Fadipe argues that the accommodative nature of the colonial marriage ordinance in 1922 coupled with the rising economic prosperity were significant impetus for polygamy.⁴⁰⁵ As a result, the dual effects of men being able to pay dowry for multiple wives and the emergence of a new class of polygamists became the by-product of the post-colonial era. In addition, the increasing reliance of male farmers on the combined labour of women and children for agricultural purposes undoubtedly made polygamy a lucrative venture. A further reason adduced for polygamy is that it is a sign of status symbol; the number of wives that a man has, to a large extent, shows his worth and calibre. Fadipe observes that:

The elitist nature of the Yoruba society resonated strongly in the character of marriage. A man's social status is measured partly by the number of his followers, including wives. During carnivals, when Yoruba chiefs marched with their followers, the community was less interested in the seniority of chiefs than in the size of their contingents. Wealthy traders and powerful chiefs used their resources to amass women, and increased during the century.

Since the 1960, marriage patterns have been considerably shaped in various forms and shades, depending on the 'traditional' or 'modern' disposition that undergirds particular households or family lineages. In family settings where polygamy is a customary, the man remains the dominant figure, while the most

⁴⁰⁵Fadipe *Sociology of Yoruba*, p. 90.

senior or first wife serves as the head of the family's domestic activities, with oversight of the other wives.⁴⁰⁶ In the ideal setting, all the wives co-operatively work towards the overall good of the household but it is often not uncommon for stiff rivalry and rancorous overture to thrive.

In spite of questions raised by those on the other side of the marriage spectrum, monogamous relationship, some major African voices argue that monogamy cannot easily be 'grafted into the make-up of the African. It is definitely unsuited to their temperament, character and philosophy of life'.⁴⁰⁷ This assertion sets the tone to discuss monogamy, the other major form of marriage among the Yoruba.

4.5.2 Monogamy

Monogamy is another type of marriage that has gained significant acceptance among the Yoruba in the present time.⁴⁰⁸ Wambui WaKaranja defines it as the practice in which a man is only permitted to marry one woman at any given time.⁴⁰⁹ Monogamy is different from serial polygamy primarily on the ground that, while the former advocates the idea of permanence or indissolubility of marriage, the latter permits remarriage only prior to disengagement from an existing marital relationship. The influences that impinge upon one's attitude

⁴⁰⁶*Ibid*, p. 91.

⁴⁰⁷ Monique Borgerhoff Mulder Serial Monogamy as Polygyny or Polyandry *Human Nature*, 2009, Volume 20, Issue 2, pp. 130-150, p. 132.

⁴⁰⁸ Data on polygamy revealed that 141 (74.6%) women were in a monogamous marriage, while 48 (25.4%) women were in a polygamous marriage in Yoruba land alone. For more details, please see: Owolabi A. A., Akanbi M. M., Abdulkadir B. A., Sambo O. A., Imam-Tamim M.K. Rethinking on Dilution of Custom with Religion: An Exposition of the Nigerian and Malaysian Legal Systems, LNS (A) Vol. 1, No: xxx, 2012, p.11.

⁴⁰⁹ Wambui Wa Karanja Outside Wives and Inside Wives in Nigeria: a study of changing perceptions in Marriage David Parkin and David Nyamwaya, Transformation of African Marriage, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987, p. 248.

towards monogamy are rooted in two divergent views. On the one hand, some people see monogamy as an offshoot of Western Christian teaching propagated by the missionaries. In support of this view, Marjorie McIntosh writes:

In the 1920s and 1930s editorials and articles in the Lagos papers argued that neither monogamy nor Westernization was necessary to salvation. Their authors noted that the bible provided many examples polygamy and that Jesus said nothing monogamy; they defended the beauty of a regulated polygamous home and nation' and criticized African churches that did not give their African branches 'home rule'.⁴¹⁰

Similarly, Yasuko Hayase and Kao- Lee Liawu agree that polygamy is viewed not only as a form of marriage, but also as a value system which had withstood the eroding effects of the imported ideology of monogamy.⁴¹¹

On the other hand, some people say the alternative type of marriage is monogamy; Samuel Johnson contends that the Yoruba were 'traditionally monogamic,' hence only the wealthy indulged in polygamy'.⁴¹² Jacob Olupona substantiates the preceding view by citing advice from *Odu Ifa*. *Odu Ifa* teaches that marrying one wife is the ideal because multiple wives lead to problem at home. However, another chapter of the same material observes that a woman who has no rivals cannot discern her own inadequacies because she has no colleagues (wives) from whom to compare notes'.⁴¹³ The cultural structure and composition of the Yoruba seem to support the polygamous view, particularly

⁴¹⁰McIntosh *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change* p. 99

⁴¹¹Yasuko Hayase and Kao- Lee Liawu Factors on Polygamy in Sub-Saharan Africa: Findings Based on the Demographic and Health Surveys *The Developing Economics*, XXXV-3 (September 1997), pp. 293 - 327

⁴¹²Johnson *The History of the Yorubas*, p. 135.

⁴¹³Jacob Olupona, Foreword to A. O. Igenozza *Polygamy and the African Churches: A Biblical Appraisal of an African Marriage System*, Ibadan: The African Association for the Study of Religion, Nigerian Publications Bureau, 2003, p. x.

given the prevalence of hierarchy and patriarchy. This is against the backdrop that acceptable levels of inequalities between men and women already exist among them. In spite of the lofty and invaluable nature of marriage, the unfortunate incidences of marital incompatibility, leading to separation or divorce, is a reality.

4.5.3 Divorce

Marjorie McIntosh notes that ‘divorce as a formal legal proceeding was unknown in traditional practices’ with special reference to the Yoruba and the wider African society.⁴¹⁴ However, instances of marriages falling apart are as old as the institution of marriage itself; hence, Farley points out that, most societies, religious and non-religious, have provisions for dealing with difficult marriages, which include separation or divorce.⁴¹⁵ While commenting on the genesis of divorce among the Yoruba, Samuel Johnson claims that prior to the nineteenth century, women stuck with their marriages.⁴¹⁶ On a similar account, N. A. Fadipe asserts that: ‘divorce was considered to be closely connected with the question of bride wealth ... revolutionary changes had occurred during the last decade of the nineteen-century and hence its prevalence has become more common’.⁴¹⁷

Adewale Rotimi avers that ‘under the traditional marriage system, characterized by polygamy and the general extended family system, divorce was very rare, because whenever marital disagreement occurs, the elders were around to quickly

⁴¹⁴Marjorie K. McIntosh *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009, p. 90.

⁴¹⁵ Farley, G. E.”Divorce, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* edited by Merrill C. Tenney. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, pp. 149-151, p.149.

⁴¹⁶Samuel Johnson *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, p. 78.

⁴¹⁷N. A. Fadipe *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, p. 84.

intervene.⁴¹⁸ However, the outcomes of socio-cultural changes and interactions have given prominence to the incidences of divorce. For example, Elisha P. Renne⁴¹⁹ observes that the British colonial masters introduced the policy detailing the rules for divorce owing to the fact that women were seen and accorded the status of *de facto* slaves.⁴²⁰ This was against the backdrop that as a result of Yoruba tradition, once married, a woman was married for life; to highlight the binding nature of such agreement, a younger brother was obliged to inherit as wife his late senior brother's wife.⁴²¹ A radical departure was witnessed in the local courts of Kabba Province (Northern Nigeria), in 1918, when women were allowed to divorce by refunding bride-price/dowry to their husbands. Consequently, as Judith Byfield notes, women were thus given the freedom to remarry and practice their religion.⁴²²

Thomas J. Bowen advances an alternative view regarding the introduction of divorce among the Yoruba. For Bowen, 'polygamy is universal in Africa. Kings, nobles and rich men have large numbers of wives and even the common people sometimes have two or three.'⁴²³ He observes that men had the privilege of divorcing their wives and the matter was easier in view of the fact that every woman was a free dealer who laboured for herself and supported herself.⁴²⁴ Although Bowen refers to divorce as though it were fairly common, his position lacks credible support. The closest to Bowen's is Larry Danzer, who opines that during the first two decades of colonialism, the administration instituted 'former regulations throughout the Yoruba

⁴¹⁸ Adewale Rotimi Paradox of Progress: The Role of Western Education in the Transformation of the Family in Nigeria *Anthropologists* Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 137- 147.

⁴¹⁹ Elisha P. Renne If Men Are Talking they Blame It on Women': A Nigeria Woman's Comments on Divorce and Child Custody *Feminist Issues* Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 37 – 39.

⁴²⁰ Amadiume, Ifi *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* London: Zed Books, 1987, p. 40.

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⁴²² Judith Byfield Women, Marriage, Divorce and the Emerging Colonial State in Abeokuta (Nigeria) 1892-1904 *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1996, pp. 32-51, p. 33.

⁴²³ Temilola Alanamu Female Childhood Socialisation in Nineteenth- Century Yorubaland,

area that prohibited child betrothal, forced marriage, woman-to-woman marriage' and thus permitted women easier access to divorce.⁴²⁵

Thus, while most Yoruba frown at divorce because it is viewed as a sign of failure,⁴²⁶ yet, Lofton Hudson observed that, divorce has become a way out for some of them who could not cope with increasing marital problems.⁴²⁷ McIntosh identifies some instances where divorce was allowed among the Yoruba. She claimed that adultery was a common cause of divorce and that a factor in many divorce suits was the wife's adultery. In contrast, it is often rare for divorce to be initiated due to the husband's extra-marital relationship, such attitude further demonstrates how women are viewed and treated in Yoruba society.⁴²⁸ Johnson cautions about the consequences of divorce, especially for women; 'a woman could not be married more than once in a lifetime'.⁴²⁹ If she at any time is found to be cheating on her husband, then the other man was at best considered as a concubine. Thus, in line with traditional practice, the woman's parents could disown her as an expression of their disapproval and that they do not endorse any relationship with a concubine. The saying captures such action: 'Aki mo oko ka male' (We won't recognize the husband of our daughter and also recognize her concubine).⁴³⁰

Lloyds identifies other causes of divorce among the Yoruba. This he proposes ranges from inability to make the necessary adjustment for a successful marriage, childlessness, marital unfaithfulness and inability to cope with the rapid social

⁴²⁵ LaRay Denzer Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study *the International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol. 27, No. 1, (1994), pp. 1 - 39.

⁴²⁶ Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, p. 138.

⁴²⁷ Lofton R. Hudson, *Till Divorce Do Us Part*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson Int., 1973, p15.

⁴²⁸ McIntosh Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change, p. 89.

⁴²⁹ Johnson *The History of the Yorubas*, p. 137.

⁴³⁰ N.A. Fadipe, *The sociology of the Yoruba* Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1970

changes that surround marriage.⁴³¹ It seems probable also that conflict exists between the interests and goals of husbands and wives and these conflicts produce irresolvable tensions that could eventually lead to divorce.⁴³² More importantly, Yoruba women believe that they should be married to men of their choice; however, inasmuch as arranged or forced marriage is encouraged in certain areas, there is the likelihood that divorce will continue to resurface.

On his part, Olusanya submits that factors associated with divorce are many and complex, thereby rendering the determination of causation an extremely difficult, if not impossible task.⁴³³ He agrees with Lloyds that this will result in young women, especially those married in their teens to much older, poor, or unattractive men, divorcing their husbands and remarrying younger and apparently more prosperous men of their choice.⁴³⁴ Furthermore, Olusanya equally identify what he calls external forces as one major cause of marital instability among the Yoruba. This external force has wrought important changes, which have tended to undermine the traditional system of marriage and its stability. He maintains that the increasing pace of urbanization, globalization, diversification of urban occupations, and ease of movement of people from one Yoruba area to another has weakened the influence of the extended family over the individual member.⁴³⁵

To Peter Lloyds, there are two paramount issues that increase the possibility of divorce among Yoruba couples. He identifies sex role, which places greater

⁴³¹Peter C. Lloyd *Divorce among Yoruba* University of Sussex, 1967, p. 67.

⁴³²*Ibid*, p. 68.

⁴³³ P.O. Olusanya A Note on Some Factors Affecting the Stability of Marriage among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, National Council on Family Relation, 1970, p. 151.

⁴³⁴*Ibid*, p. 152.

⁴³⁵*Ibid*, p.151.

importance on the place of a male child in the family. Secondly, Lloyds pinpoints women's economic independence; Yoruba women are increasingly asserting a higher measure of economic independence by engaging in income-yielding jobs previously seen as exclusive to men. Such occupational independence is increasingly facilitating the woman's right to use her own income. For example, a documented report indicated that three-quarters of Yoruba wives were working mainly on their own account, while one-fifth of all wives were able to provide all their own food and clothing; and only 5 percent were totally dependent upon their husbands.⁴³⁶

The contribution of this review is in noting that although significant literature exist on Yoruba marriages, paying special focus on spousal relations, however, available studies on how intercultural contacts shapes such relationship is minimal to say the least and none existent to say the worse. More so, various social changes within traditional marriage like divorce are substantially attributable to the various contacts and interactions between the Yoruba people and the outside world. Such development portends likely avenues to explore why Yoruba marriages experiences instabilities outside its traditional frontier. As Amba M. Oduyoye, Femi Okunola and several other feminist thinkers contends, the practice that treat women issues with levity and disdain while legitimizing men's supremacy in the name of tradition will remain contentious.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 68.

⁴³⁷ Please see: Amba M. Oduyoye Culture and the Quest for Woman's Rights, *African Culture and the Quest for Human Right*, Oluwafemi A. Okunlola Theocentric Feminism: An African Theological Perspective of Authentic Womanhood PhD Thesis Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomosho, 2002.

4.6 Conclusion to the Literature Review

The reviews in the preceding and present chapters were based on the concepts of “power” and “Yoruba marriage” because the two appears interwoven. On one hand, chapter three examined the various concepts of power from a variety of standpoints. It offered in-depth analysis of how Yoruba cultural understanding of power affects spousal power relationship among Yoruba Christian couples in the NWE. It noted that, from the perspectives of Yoruba couples, power relations are largely hierarchical as well as asymmetrical. As a result, the *status quo* of women as subservient, which is usually taken for granted within the wider Nigerian setting, inadvertently runs into serious trouble, raising issues of marital conflicts, disharmony or divorce whenever Yoruba couples relocate to England.

In addition, the chapter acknowledged that there are a number of studies on the principal factor that influences the family decision-making process; resource theory is a key determinant. The thesis, however, argued that contrary to the views of resource theorists, the dominance of husbands within the Yoruba family is not necessarily due to their roles as breadwinners; it is mainly based on cultural privileges and patriarchy. After all, within Nigerian setting, several upper middle-class women or wives, in spite of their financial empowerment or status, remain submissive to their husbands. However, resources are strongly connected to power when norms related to authority are more patriarchal than egalitarian.

On the other hand, the second section of the literature review, the fourth chapter, established that marriage is robustly enmeshed in the cultural framework of the Yoruba. To a large extent, it uncovered the rich layers of Yoruba worldviews,

thereby facilitating a better understanding. Thus, against this backdrop, it argued that any research regarding the sociological reality of a non-Western people should not be necessarily subjected to the thought pattern of Western societies, as its import may be lost in such an attempt. Equally, the review noted that Yoruba traditional marriage, although influential has undergone remarkable changes and transformations from its earliest forms, where parents decided their children's marriage partners, to the modern era, where children make their own choices, merely to be endorsed by their parents.

Overall, there is lack of consensus in terms of the types of marriages that is privileged; it is difficult to legitimize a more appropriate pattern between polygamy and monogamy, as neither is viewed sinful. While the proponents of polygamy argue that it lessens sexual activities outside marriage, monogamy, on the hand, is viewed as promoting the ideals that marriage typifies. Divorce has become an issue of contention in Yoruba marriages. Despite the traditional stance that the presence of children in a marriage serves to guarantee the union, the literature suggests that other pressures are instrumental. For example, women's economic empowerment and opportunities offer a veritable alternative to living with a disliked or abusing husband.

Moreover, given the fact that one cannot underestimate the possibility of individual differences, the Yoruba culture is both sympathetic with polygamy and monogamy. Hence, any departure from such marriage practices – either for same sex marriage or cohabitation –appears increasingly remote. In sum, to navigate the perennial marital crisis that confronts Yoruba Christian couples; the

argument presented here favours a renegotiation of power relations as a template for even redistribution of spousal power and particularly to the broader diaspora couples as a way forward. I now turn discussion in the next chapter on how these two concepts affects, shapes and plays out among Yoruba couples in the NWE.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE YORUBA DIASPORA FAMILY IN ITS EXTERNAL CONTEXT

5.1 Introduction

Chapters four and five of this thesis present my analysis of 30 interviews among Yoruba Christian couples (respondents) in the NWE. The findings fall into two categories of experiences: external and internal. The external experiences relate to how they encounter and interact with the various social structures in the host community and the corresponding consequences of the interaction on their marriage. The internal experiences focus on the relationship between the Yoruba couples as they negotiate the prevailing social realities in the host community. These categorizations are mapped onto the presentation of the materials in the fourth and fifth chapters. As noted in the chapter on methodology, a thematic approach was taken in presenting this analysis. The argument will be constructed around three key areas, namely: cultural conflicts, social status and financial considerations.

5.2 Cultural Conflicts

All interviewees, irrespective of gender differences, overwhelmingly emphasised the cultural differences between the Yoruba community and the host communities. Particularly, they pointed out the patriarchal and hierarchical structure of the Yoruba community and found the host community as more liberating and less gender-biased. Respondent 10 accentuated the idea of cultural difference, viz: ‘that *buba* and *sokoto* is adored and accepted by Yoruba does not make it acceptable to the

Englishman.’⁴³⁸ This implies the idea that an English person might not recognize what is valuable to a Yoruba person.

5.2.1 The Concept of Culture

A differentiated understanding of culture clarifies the issues that are important to my interviewees. Clifford Geertz argues that ‘culture is best studied as a publicly available symbolic system’ in which ‘the spelling out of the context’ can bring out the true meaning of the intended action.⁴³⁹ Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by features including fashion, language, religion, food, symbols, social habits, values, music and art. It expresses the identity as well as the distinctive feature of a particular group of people.⁴⁴⁰ Culture is ‘the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from others and is passed from generation to generation.’⁴⁴¹ It is a set of shared and enduring meaning, values, and beliefs that characterize national, ethnic or other groups and orient their behaviour.’⁴⁴² Whilst the above definitions offer different accounts of the concept of culture, they all point towards it as being a social construct.

Culture is neither intrinsic to human nature, nor can it exist on its own. It, nonetheless, influences the ways in which individuals think and behave in any given situation. In other words, when understood as a social construct, culture is fluid. It transcends the modes of dress, music, morals, or language; it embraces the totality of

⁴³⁸ ‘Buba’ and ‘Sokoto’ are the official male Yoruba attire; they are the choice for most ceremonies. Their popularity is conventional to the extent that every adult Yoruba has at least a pair.

⁴³⁹ Clifford Geertz *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp.113 and 127.

⁴⁴⁰ Erickson, P. A. and Murphy, L. D. *Reading for a History of Anthropological Theory* Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001, p. 26.

⁴⁴¹ Hofstede, G. *Cultures Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* London: Sage Publications, p. 21.

⁴⁴² Mulholland, Juana *The language of Negotiation* London: Routledge, 1991, p. 11.

human actions and the meaning assigned to them.⁴⁴³ Culture is, therefore, an all-embracing phenomenon; it is inclusive and shapes people's way of life. So, what happens if this dynamic understanding of culture is applied to the lived experience of members of the Yoruba diaspora in the NWE? To respond to this question it is necessary to examine the key characteristics of the Yoruba culture.

5.2.2. Yoruba Culture

John Mbiti opines that Africans are 'notoriously religious' and culturally robust.⁴⁴⁴ Bolaji Idowu similarly states: 'the Yoruba (from south-west Nigeria) are in all things shaped by their culture.'⁴⁴⁵ The Yoruba people are significantly rich in culture and exude an overwhelming connection to it. Within the Nigerian cultural landscape, they are easily distinguishable from other cultural groupings, such as the Igbo, the Ijaw and the Hausa, by their tribal marks, dresses, modes of greeting and festivals. Kola Abimbola writes: 'the hallmarks of the Yoruba are to be found in a unique set of religio-philosophical beliefs on the bases of which they organise, regulate and moderate their day to day life.'⁴⁴⁶ For example, through the process of socialization, these cultural tenets are sustained and transmitted to successive generations, mainly through the internal mechanism of the extended family system.

The communal nature of interpersonal relations further perpetuates and reinforces the privileging of the community over the individual's identity. To the Yoruba, the saying – 'it takes a woman to birth a child but the community to train the child' – is

⁴⁴³ Giddens, A. and Sutton, P.W. *Sociology* 7th ed. Cambridge: Polity, 2003, p. 40.

⁴⁴⁴ John S. Mbiti *African Religions and Philosophy* London: Heinemann, 1990, p. 1.

⁴⁴⁵ Bolaji Idowu *Olodumare: God in Yoruba belief* London: Longman and Co., 1968, p. ix.

⁴⁴⁶ Kola Abimbola *Yoruba Culture: A Philosophical Account* Great Britain: Iroko Academic Publisher, 2006, p. 25.

crucial. It mirrors the interrelatedness of individuals within the Yoruba socio-economic context, in farming, domestic chores, subsistent economic activities, preserving communal identity and moral upbringing of children, and so on. Communality among the Yoruba is intrinsically woven into the very fabric of their culture; as such, its absence engenders personal relationships or societal instability. Moreover, in Yoruba traditional settings, leadership is framed around patriarchal considerations; control and authority by men is seen as normative, and women play subordinate role.

The interview data suggested that a change of this is a key factor exacerbating marital problem among couples. For instance, Respondents 1, 2 and 3 ⁴⁴⁷ averred, respectively, that: ‘among Yoruba people, the man is the head of the woman and, for me, not to give directives in my family affects me’; ‘in England, couples are equal; no one is a servant’; ‘in England, men see themselves as second fiddles because the government and its agencies are in full support of women’. The view of Respondent 2 is significant because she distanced herself from the mainstream opinion about male dominance, perhaps due to her long-standing contact with English culture. In common with her position, the literature has also underscored the notion that equality among males and females is not strange within Yoruba culture (proverbs).⁴⁴⁸ The implications will be given further attention in chapter five.

⁴⁴⁷ While women accept the Yoruba patriarchal system without questioning, in their home country, in England, they take issue with it; Respondents 1 and 3 were males, while Respondent 2, a Yoruba woman, had lived in England for thirty-two years.

⁴⁴⁸ F. A Olasupo, Olugbemi Victoria Kikelomo and Jumoke Ajuwon Adeniran ‘Proverbs and Gender Equalities and Equities in African Cultures: Yoruba Culture as A Case Study’ *Global Journal of Human Social Science Arts and Humanities* Vol. 12, Issue 13, 2012, pp. 10-26; Kolawole M.M ‘Women’s Oral Literature As A Site For Dynamic Self Expression’ *Gender Perception and Development in Africa*, Lagos: Arrabon Academic Publishers, 1998, p. 8; Oduyoye, *African Culture and the Quest for Women’s Rights*, p. 16.

Adeyinka Aderinto observes that ‘women generally agreed that the issue of decision-making is not debatable, as it is un-African for women to lead.’⁴⁴⁹ Taiwo Makinde adds that ‘a woman in Yoruba culture occupies various positions— *iya*(mother), *iyawo* (wife), *omobinrin*(daughter), and *aje*(witch). The way she is perceived depends on the position she occupies and the different perceptions are reflected through songs, works of arts, music, language and religion.’⁴⁵⁰ From childhood, female children are resigned to a state of submission, while their male counterparts internalise such tradition endorsed by culture. This idea of male dominance shapes their perceptions, especially in terms of male/female relationship. Of particular interest is this perception because it feeds into the marital expectations of those that migrate to the NWE.

5.2.3 The Yoruba and UK Cultures: Communality and Individualism

In the NWE, the Yoruba immigrants find a complex cultural scene. The literature is replete with the reality of multiculturalism in contemporary British society.⁴⁵¹ Michael Gallagher observes that culture assigns specific identity and influences our worldview;⁴⁵² such reality does not negate the view that there is a dominant culture that is projected within English society. For instance, the English culture, as expressed today through the mode of dressing, language, food, entertainment,

⁴⁴⁹ Aderinto Adeyinka. Subordinated by Culture: Constraint of Women in a Rural Yoruba Community, *Nigeria Journal of African Studies* Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 176-187.

⁴⁵⁰ Taiwo Makinde Motherhood as a Source of Empowerment of Women in Yoruba Culture *Nordic Journal of African Studies* Vol. 13, No. 2, 2004, pp. 164-177, p. 165.

⁴⁵¹ Will Kymlicka Immigration, Citizenship, Multiculturalism: Exploring the Links *Political Quarterly* Vol. 74, Issue 1, pp. 195-208; Mark Olssen From the Crick Report to the Parekh Report: Multiculturalism, Cultural Difference and Democracy the Re-visioning of Citizenship Education *British Journal of Sociology of Education* Vol. 23, Issues 2, pp. 179-92.

⁴⁵² Michael Paul Gallagher *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* New Jersey Paulist Press, 2003, p. 14.

celebrations and values, is illustrative of their way of life or the prevailing culture.

As Varum Uberoi and Tariq Modood put it:

Cultural neutrality is difficult; a state can react to a culturally diverse citizenry in different ways, it could try to remain neutral between cultural groups and not favour any of them but this is untenable as the language, norms, and sensibilities used to regulate the collective affairs of its citizens have to come from somewhere and are usually the cultural traits of at least one group.⁴⁵³

Although one cannot claim that there is cultural homogeneity within British society (because different cultural groups identify with the prevailing norms within their traditions) there is a conspicuous culture of individualism in contrast to Yoruba communality. The English or the historical Anglo-Saxon tradition is the prevailing sensibility or yardstick used to regulate the collective affairs in the North West of England.⁴⁵⁴ Therefore, given that there is no people/society without culture, migrants who relocate to the UK neither come into a society that lives in a cultural vacuum nor do they automatically jettison their cultural inclinations. The cultural encounter, therefore, is complex.

In this regard, Colleen Ward *et al.* argue that ‘intercultural contact raises significant issues for immigrants, indigenous and ethnic minority peoples in culturally plural societies.’⁴⁵⁵ Conflict arises from the perceptions that different identity components prescribe incompatible values, behaviours or commitments.⁴⁵⁶ The point to note here

⁴⁵³ Varum Uberoi and Tariq Modood Has Multiculturalism in Britain Retreated? *Journal of African Cultural Studies* Vol. 24, Issue 2, 2013, p. 208.

⁴⁵⁴ Phillip Wallage and Wim van der Wurff On Saying ‘yes’ in Early Anglo-Saxon England *Anglo-Saxon England* Vol. 42, Dec., 2013, pp. 217— 248.

⁴⁵⁵ Colleen Ward, Jaimee Stuart & Larissa Kus the Construction and Validation of a Measure of Ethno-Cultural Identity Conflict *Journal of Personality Assessment* Vol. 93, No. 5, 462- 473.

⁴⁵⁶ Baumeister, R. Shapoiro, J. P. and Tice, D. M. Two Kinds of Identity Crisis *Journal of Personality* Vol. 53, pp. 407- 42.

is that there is often an intense feeling of being torn between different cultural identities experienced by migrants. Consequently, Yoruba couples could be said to find themselves in a state of cultural dilemma, especially as relating to communality and headship of the husband. For example, Respondent 5 affirmed that: ‘while our Yoruba culture accepts the husband as the head of the wife, here in England the talk is about equality. So, myself like many Yoruba men are confused’.

An important question, therefore, is: to what extent have Yoruba couples been integrated with the English culture? Studies suggest that, among immigrant communities, the issue of cultural assimilation or integration is complex and multifaceted; it involves migrants learning the language and role expectations of the absorbing society, leading to further changes in attitude and cultural norms.⁴⁵⁷ A widely used framework for the study of acculturation is Berry’s model.⁴⁵⁸ He argues that acculturating persons, such as immigrants, refugees, sojourners, native peoples and ethnic minorities are confronted with two fundamental questions: How important is it to maintain their cultural heritage and traditions? And how important is it for them to participate in the wider society? A combination of the response to these questions resonates in four acculturation categories: integration, separation, assimilation and marginalisation. Research has shown that integration is the most preferred option, given its psychological and social outcomes even though it is not

⁴⁵⁷ In-depth discussions on the complex nature of cultural assimilation are offered in these studies: Gopala Ganesh ‘Spousal Influence in Consumer Decision: A Study of Cultural Assimilation’ *Journal of Consumer Marketing* Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 132- 55; Shaull, S. L. Gramanna, J. H. ‘The Effect of Cultural Assimilation on the Importance of Family-Related and Nature-Related Recreation among Hispanic Americans’ *Journal of Leisure Research* Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 47- 63.

⁴⁵⁸ Berry John is a professor of psychology; his theory of acculturation is the most well-known and widely used framework among scholars in cultural studies and contemporary anthropological research. He identifies two dimensions and four categories of acculturation. Further discussions on these are offered in: Berry, J. W. Immigration, Acculturation and Adaption *Applied Psychology: An International Review* Vol. 46, pp.5 - 68; Berry J. W. Acculturation as Varieties of Adaption in Padila, A. *Acculturation: Theory, Models and Some New Findings* Boulder, Co: Westview, pp. 9 - 25.

always achievable.⁴⁵⁹ So, the enthusiastic cultural inclinations of the Yoruba necessitate the question: to what extent has cultural integration taken place among married couples?

All participants noted the assertion that the English culture influences Yoruba marriages. However, the male participants were more critical of its influence. For example, Respondent 7 stated that: ‘this country is a leveller, you become equal with your wife.’ Corroborating this view, Respondent 14 added ‘when we were in Nigeria, my wife could not talk to me the way she does now (England).’ In England, marital relationships between men and women are ideally based on egalitarian considerations, in contrast to what obtains in Yoruba land; they are based less on patriarchal or hierarchical orientations. A study by Hardill et al. notes that the idea of collegiality among couples is given within the British society, in contrast to the traditional ones.⁴⁶⁰

A majority of the interview respondents were of the view that the English culture negatively influences Yoruba Christian marriages, particularly because of the absence of communality and patriarchy. In this regard, Respondent 1 noted that:

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁶⁰ In a study on marriage in Great Britain, Irene Hardill, Anna C. Dudleston, Anne E. Green and David W. Owen studied 30 dual-career, educated households in Great Britain. 17 households fell into the middle category and 13 into egalitarian marriages. In two-thirds of the households, the male had the lead career; the remaining third is divided between more weight on the woman's career and equal weighting. They employed the following features to classify the marriage of the couples studied: level of commitment of each partner to the labour market, occupation and hours worked, domestic responsibilities, including childcare, lead and follower careers, and the attitudes and words of the informants. The key finding of the study is that egalitarianism in decision-making is affected by factors other than the economic status of the female partner. Although factors such as age of partners, stage in life cycle (presence of children), type of job held by each partner, and who has the leading career are significant. The idea of equal rights among the couples was well established. Although this study was done within the context of established British couples, it is significant in further substantiating the claim that there is a prevailing culture of equal rights between English spouses. Please see: Dudleston, Anna C., Anne E. Green, Irene Hardill, and David W. Owen *Decision Making in Dual-Career Household* Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999, p. 8.

It is two side of a coin, you see, I have been married now for eighteen years and coming to the UK has already changed my life because I can no longer stand on my feet. If I say as a man that can no longer stand on his feet, I mean, you are faced with the challenge of not able to take control of your home, because this is a society that favours women. Take it or leave it because everything is centred on women. Back at home there is a level of respect but coming to the UK, there is no longer respect. She decides on what she wants to do, when she wants to do it and how she wants to do it. So, it has really affected our marriage and only God knows what's going to happen.

One can infer the extent of disillusionment and frustration occasioned by conflicting cultural demands and this seems to spiral among several couples.

It is equally ironic that, despite the stress that is placed on the equality of husband and wife within British society, the interview findings indicated that the women participants, in common with the men, viewed the culture within the wider English society as inimical to marital stability, particularly among Yoruba Christian couples. On the one hand, the absence of communality in the UK engenders marital tensions. According to a female respondent, 'in my own home, as a Yoruba woman, even though I have lived in England for thirty years, I still allow my husband to make decisions. Some women may not like this but that is what it means to be a Yoruba woman.'⁴⁶¹

Commenting on how individualism negatively impacts Yoruba marital stability, Respondent 11 asserted that:

There are a lot of challenges with the culture of individualism. I will start with my family: because I don't have my extended family around me, it's very difficult; I don't have my brothers, sisters, father, my mum. This place, it's just you and yourself and your family, nobody, nowhere to go to.

⁴⁶¹ Interview excerpt from respondent 5 conducted on 10/5/2015 in her residence.

Similarly, Respondent 13 commented on the absence of this kind of support from the family. She lamented thus: ‘back home in Nigeria we have people that help us with the children and other household duties, but here you have to manage yourself.’ These participants acknowledged that the non-communal nature of the English society subtly causes undue marital difficulties among Yoruba couples.

A number of cultural studies in the African setting have noted the harmonizing and cushioning effect of a communal support system, sometimes referred to as the extended family system.⁴⁶² Mbiti summarises African communality thus: ‘I am because we are and, since we are, therefore I am,’⁴⁶³ which emphasises that an individual’s identity arises from and is conferred by the community. A Yoruba saying captures Mbiti’s idea: *Enikan nibimo; igba eniyanni wo* (it takes a woman to give birth to a child but it takes the entire community to train the child). The point here is that no one belongs to himself/herself; everyone exists for the community, just as the community exists for everyone. Consequently, in the absence of a social welfare scheme, the Yoruba culture has developed inbuilt support mechanisms that cater for people even outside the boundaries of nuclear family ties. For instance, Respondent 13 stated that: ‘while we were in Nigeria my nieces, nephews and house maid lived with us but things are not the same here.’ The point to be noted here is that relocation to England has denied several couples the domestic support that hitherto made their marital relations less stressful.

⁴⁶²John Mbiti *African Religions and Philosophies* New York: Doubleday and Company, 1970, p. 141; Adogame, A. “African Christian Communities in Diaspora” In Ogbu Kalu ed., *African Christianity: An African Story*, Vol. 3 Pretoria: Business Print Centre, 2005, pp. 494-509 and Osagie, Eghosa ‘Mission for Twenty-first Century Pastor’, In *Ecclesiastes: the Preacher, the Church and the Contemporary Society*, Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited, 2006, pp.149-158.

⁴⁶³Mbiti, p. 141.

Therefore, the lack of communal support is not only seen as culturally negative but also practically problematic, particularly in terms of childcare and other domestic chores. A major argument of this thesis is that marital tension and instability among Yoruba couples are multifaceted, arising from a lack of communality and traditional hierarchy, gender-role reversal and the socioeconomic empowerment of women. The next section focuses on how the absence of hierarchical marital relations in England affects Yoruba marriages.

5.2.4 Men, Women and Hierarchy

Just as the socio-political structure of the Yoruba is framed around male leadership, other spheres also exclusively revolve around hierarchy tied to male dominance. Thus, several African feminist scholars are largely unanimous that African culture is hostile to women, always according them subservient positions; hence, they argue for a paradigm shift.⁴⁶⁴ The words of Respondent 10 are illuminating:

In Nigeria, you are in charge as the husband of the house, but here you cannot say you are in charge because you have to pay your bills; your wife is as good as you in this direction. You both are in charge. In a way, culturally speaking, you are less than a man in the home.

A total of 9 out of the 11 men interviewed, representing a greater number of male participants, shared a similar notion: they do not see themselves as being in charge of their marriages in the NWE.

⁴⁶⁴Mary Amber Oduyeye *Daughters of Anuwa: African Women and Patriarchy* New York: Orbis Books, 1995, p. 131; Josephine Beoku-Betts and Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi 'African Feminist Scholars in Women Studies; Negotiating Spaces of Dislocation and Transformation in the Study of Women' *Meridians Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* Vol. 6, No. 1, 2005, pp. 113-132; and O. O. Familusi African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example *Journal of Pan-African Studies* Vol. 5, No. 1, 2012, pp. 299- 332.

In addition, Respondent 1 (a male) averred that: ‘most of the time, the women in this country do whatsoever they feel like doing.’ This was reflected by Respondent 15 (a woman), who maintained that: ‘maybe in Nigeria, it was possible for my husband to have the final say, but, here in the UK, I must have my input in all issues.’ The issues at stake here relate to the idea of women associated with being in charge owing to their enhanced financial status or their usurpation of the man’s position. This contrasts with the typical traditional setting, where the husband is usually the family breadwinner. In other words, the financial empowerment of women seems to give them a voice within their matrimonial homes. Such a development is seen as un-African by my respondents and proves to be a hotbed of marital instability.

Patti Lather’s proposition of hierarchy as perpetuating male dominance and superiority at the expense of and undermining the identity or contributions of women⁴⁶⁵ is significant in understanding the traditional Yoruba concept of marital relations. Yoruba folklore and parables are intrinsically sated with instances where an ideal husband is one that exudes authority and conspicuous masculinity.

Dopamu and Alana mention two Yoruba wise sayings: ‘*Okunrin le ni aya mefa koburu; okunrin kan soso ni Oluwa yan f’obinrin*’ and ‘*Pasan ta fi na’yale, o nbe laja fun’yawo.*’⁴⁶⁶ (‘A man can have six wives; it is not bad; but God ordained that a woman would marry only a man’; and ‘the whip that was used to beat the first wife is kept for the second wife.’) Such demeaning expressions are not only symbolic of the

⁴⁶⁵Patti Lather *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern* London: Routledge, 1991, pp. xv-9.

⁴⁶⁶Dopamu P. A. and Alana E. O. ‘Ethical System’ in Lawal N. S, Saduku, M. N. O. and Dopamu A. (eds.), *Understanding Yoruba Life and Culture*, Threnton, N. J.: Africa World Press, 2004, p. 18.

subservient position of women, but also illustrative of how they are objectified within a patriarchal and hierarchical Yoruba worldview. According to Respondent 9: ‘the payment of dowry appears as the traditional stamp of ownership that Yoruba men claim over their wives, well, that may be so but I don’t think it is possible here.’ In essence, the underlying assumption of these proverbs is that women are regarded as children to be disciplined anytime they err and that a man has the right to beat his wife (or, indeed, his wives).

The objectifying of women, as enshrined in Yoruba culture and internalized by Yoruba men, enters into a state of dilemma within the English society, where the ideals of marital equality are promoted. Another consideration is that several women relocated to England because of their professional backgrounds and, thus, became responsible for bringing their husbands to the country. Available sources revealed that several Yoruba women in England fall within this category.⁴⁶⁷ Respondent 14 stated thus: ‘I came before my husband, actually we both sat down and decision was that it will be easier for me as a nurse to integrate into the system so I came before him and did all I needed to do to get registered and to get a job and he and the children came later as my dependents’.

When women come first,⁴⁶⁸ the outcome is often predictable; it reduces dependence on their husband, and brings into question the man’s position or authority in the

⁴⁶⁷ As part of this research, the researcher interviewed a number of Yoruba couples from the major Nigerian churches in Liverpool (Baptist, Alive Believers’ Redeemed Christian Church of God and Winners’ Chapel). The findings showed that over half of the Yoruba men interviewed came into the UK through their wives’ professional platforms. Secondly, Toyin Falola’s work accentuates the enterprising and productive prowess of Yoruba women: Please see *the Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (eds.), Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004.

⁴⁶⁸ The works of Sheba George (Sheba Miriam George *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration* California: University of California Press, Ltd. 2005) and Ouseph Thomas Puthussery, PhD Thesis: ‘Marriage and Migration: A Social-theological Analysis, A study of the Syro-

family. Therefore, based on the aggregate responses from participants, it is evident that hierarchy within Yoruba culture has a cohesive influence among couples.⁴⁶⁹ Hence, its absence in the marital experiences of Yoruba couples in the NWE is, to no small degree, responsible for marital instability.

5.3 Social Status

The couples interviewed overwhelmingly agreed that the social status of Yoruba women in the NWE significantly affects power relations within their marriages, especially where the woman is the main applicant instead of the dependant.⁴⁷⁰ The comment of Respondent 24 is illustrative: ‘whenever there is a serious quarrel between my wife and me, I always hear her say, ‘remember how you came to this country.’ Socio-cultural analysis of ethnic minority groups or immigrants indicated that socioeconomic or professional/occupational differences within the host society determine the social status accorded to individuals.⁴⁷¹ Such differences polarize and usher in winners or losers, particularly within communities where hegemonic considerations are based on patriarchy. The comment of Respondent 24 in response to his wife’s reminder of how he came into the country is significant: ‘this is another

Malabar Catholic Community in Liverpool, UK’, November 2010 offer in-depth analysis of the effects of wives moving/relocating to a foreign country before their husband and how such event shapes marital relations in their new/adopted countries. Chapter three pays special attention to their works.

⁴⁶⁹ Fadipe, N. A. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, p. 221; David D. Laitin *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, pp. 171- 84; S. O. Metiboba ‘the changing roles of the family in the socialization process: the case of the O-Kun Yoruba’ accessed on 13.2. 15 from Uniilorin.edu.ng

⁴⁷⁰ The dynamics of main applicant/dependant among Yoruba couples work out in such a way that is congenial with which of the partner has the better job/makes more financial contributions to the family. Oftentimes, it is usually the principal applicant/sponsor that is the breadwinner; thus, as in many instances where the woman/wife is the main applicant, her social status is enhanced as a result of her better financial earnings. This, in turn, inevitably affects power relations with her spouse. Therefore, consistent with a study on ‘an analysis of decision-making power among married and unmarried women’. the authors, Mazamil Jan and Shubeena Akhar argue that women empowered by their career/professional status participates more in decision-making in their homes. See: Mazimil Jan and Shubeena Akhar An Analysis of Decision-Making Power among Married and Unmarried Women *Stud. Home Comm. Science* 2(1), 43 – 50.

⁴⁷¹ Chaim Fershtman and Yoram Weiss ‘Social Status, Culture and Economic Performance’ *The Economic Journal* 103, No. 419, pp. 946 – 959.

way to remind me that I am her dependant and makes me feel less than a man'. In addition, responses from other female respondents indicated that a majority of the Yoruba women interviewed are the main visa applicants.⁴⁷² Such development inadvertently reduces the woman's dependence, especially in financial matters, on their husband, and raises the issue of who is actually in charge in the family.

Social status can be understood as the degree of honour or prestige attached to one's position in society.⁴⁷³ The sociological literature recognizes that different occupations have different social statuses. However, the social status that is accorded individuals within specific cultures, to a large extent, depends on cultural, political, occupational, and social values and norms. Social status is usually earned in two ways: by personal achievements or through an ascribed position.⁴⁷⁴ People who come from a lower-class background have to depend more on other people. 'If you don't have resources and education, you really adapt to the environment, which is more threatening by turning to other people'.⁴⁷⁵ Dacha Keltner observes that the opportunities offered by quality education are vast and open an avenue for better standard of life in every environment.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷²The interview finding indicated that a large number of Yoruba men came into the country as their wives immigration dependants. In other words, most women are the main sponsors while their husbands and children become their dependants. Most male participants claim that such development has grave negative psychological impact on their ego because it indirectly gives their wives authority over them.

⁴⁷³*Ibid*, p. 948.

⁴⁷⁴Chaim Fershtman and Yoram Weiss, p. 946; Dejun Su, Chad Richardson and Guang-zhen Wang Assessing Cultural Assimilation of Mexican Americans: How rapidly do their Gender-Role Attitudes Converge to the US Mainstream? *Social Science Quarterly*, p. 764.

⁴⁷⁵Keltner, G. Social Class as Culture. *Association for Psychological Science* Vol. 8, Aug. 2011.

⁴⁷⁶ Keltner, G. 'Social Class as Culture' Vol. 8, Aug. 2011 accessed on 13/5/13 from: www.psychologicalscience.org

In traditional societies, such as the Yoruba society, an individual's social status is of paramount importance. Among other things, it determines her/his power and influence within society.⁴⁷⁷ From the socioeconomic perspective, workers or individuals benefit not only from the wages they receive, but also from being associated with a particular work. Therefore, the social status of married Yoruba men and women in the NWE is vital because, as argued by Fershtman and Weiss, different occupations have different social statuses. Within the Yoruba community, there is a strong correlation between one's economic status and the social status that is accorded to one's occupation. Consequently, when women occupy positions with higher financial remunerations, their social status is raised. This study observed that this can result in marital inequality and tension. An instance of this is Respondent 6, who reported that, 'my husband has to take my views into consideration because, after all, our UK story was made possible because of my job'. Another instance is Respondent 3, who averred that:

women spend their money freely in this country; they might go out buy things home even without the consent of the husband but in Nigeria, it is far away from that; when the wife collects salary she informs the husband and they sit down to plan on the usage of the money but here in the UK, the husband has no say.

Furthermore, Respondent 4 stated that the aim of her husband was 'to dominate and control everything about my life in spite of the fact that I am responsible for him being in this country.' Other women similarly emphasized the fact that every woman will feel less important if her husband refuses to listen to her or treats her like an object; and that no woman is ready to accept such in the UK, especially when she is responsible for the husband's stay in the country. On the other hand, where the man

⁴⁷⁷ Harold Kerbo, *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in the United States* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1983, p.113.

is accorded a higher social status, women's experiences are not changed. The case of Respondent 21 is revealing: 'my husband talks to me however he likes; sometimes resorts to beating simply because I am his dependant'.

There are two crucial points to note from the analysis of social status among Yoruba couples in the NWE. First, either the husband or wife can become the more or less influential party, depending on who is the main visa applicant or sponsor. Second, the individual (husband/wife) who has an immigration status can exert significant power in the marital relationship. A study by Sheba M. George⁴⁷⁸ throws further light on how being the main visa applicant or sponsor influences marital relations. She analysed what she termed 'an usual immigration pattern' to find out what happens when women come first and thus become the breadwinners in the family. To her, 'the story of economic mobility and professional achievement conceals underlying conditions of upheaval not only in the families and immigrants communities but also in the sending community'.⁴⁷⁹ As for Yoruba women, in common with other immigrant women in culturally plural societies, their economic mobility and professional achievements sometimes lead to marital instability.

⁴⁷⁸ Sheba George moved to the USA from India at age 12. She became an academic with strong research interest in diaspora Indian studies, with particular focus on issues of inequalities among Indian couples that relocated to the US. In addition, her work presents in-depth understanding about the interactions of working-class immigrant men and how they manoeuvre the Indian patriarchal system in transnational immigrant situations. George's work has a strong relevance to this research, in that both share a similar context in terms of the methodology, and conservative/traditional settings where the sample population/participants originated. Equally important is the commonality between the US and the British environment in terms of the pluralistic and multicultural composition. However, factors such as gender difference/bias and female-led immigration are significant considerations that differentiate George's research from this one. Despite such difference, the author remains a key dialoguing partner. Please see: George *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration*, p. 17.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 18

Another way in which social status affects marital relations is that the settled partner exerts power over the other whose stay in the country is predicated on him/her. To buttress this point, Respondent 1 opined that ‘my wife never disobeyed me until her stay in the country became regularized and no longer under immigration control.’

Anitha Sundari writes:

Where the immigration status of women is dependent on their husbands, or vice versa, the power imbalance within a marriage is further weighed against women/men by state laws. For either the man/woman experiencing marital instability, the choices are stark; leaving an abusive relationship can mean deportation, and this threat is a powerful tool in the hands of the abusers.⁴⁸⁰

Put differently, Sundari seems to highlight the point that an immigrant’s residency or citizenship rights feed into the social status of that individual within marital relations. This is applicable among the Yoruba couples interviewed. Hence, the partner that is depending on the spouse’s immigration status remains loyal or submissive because, in the event of breakdown in relationship, such partner no longer has the right to be in the UK and will be faced with deportation.⁴⁸¹ Thus, to the Yoruba couples in the NWE, the mental, physical, economic and psychological challenges emanating from women as a result of their enhanced social status will continue to question power relations among Yoruba couples.

⁴⁸⁰ Sundari Anitha Neither Safety Nor Justice: the UK Government Response to Domestic Violence Against Immigrant Women *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* Vol. 30, No. 3, September 2008, pp.189-202.

⁴⁸¹ John Burchill Safeguarding Vulnerable Families: Work with Refugees and Asylum Seekers *Community Practitioners* Vol. 84, No. 2, February 2011, pp. 23-6.

5.4 Identity Conflict around Child Care

5.4.1 Identity

The concept of identity has a wide-ranging meanings and implications; hence, it is a complex and highly disputed field. Its connotation differs according to who is using it and for what purpose. For example, within psychology, especially social psychology, explanations of conflict draw upon social identity theory as one of the primary explanations for conflict.⁴⁸² In sociology, identity is related to self-awareness and self-consciousness that leads to cultural norms and group identities. Within politics, identity politics is seen as the quest to reconcile the concepts of national and communal identities; while studies of religion attribute a large part of one's identity to one's beliefs.⁴⁸³

The views of the interviewees on identity can be summarized the opinions of Respondents 5 and 12. The former asserted that: 'my identity is who I am, my language, accent, values and ethnicity; that which makes me Yoruba as opposed to other people'.⁴⁸⁴ The latter argued that: 'My identity is that I am a Yoruba person, a woman and not a man'.

Deng states that identity refers to the way individuals define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture.⁴⁸⁵ To Michael A. Hogg, identity is 'people's concept of who they are, of what sort of people they are and how they relate to others'.⁴⁸⁶ Although these definitions are valuable, they fail to capture its meaning in the context of this study. Consequently,

⁴⁸² Colleen Ward Jaimee Stuart and Larrissa Kus the Construction and Validation of a Measure of Ethno-cultural Identity Conflict *Journal of Personality Assessment* 93(5), 462 - 473.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 468.

⁴⁸⁴ Respondent 5.

⁴⁸⁵ Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*. Washington, DC: Brookings, 1995, p.8.

⁴⁸⁶ Michael A. Hogg 'A Social Identity Theory of Leadership' *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 2001, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 184 - 200.

the need for a more applicable definition that unpacks its implications in the area of childcare is necessary. James D. Fearon holds that identity is currently used in two linked ways: ‘social and personal’.⁴⁸⁷ While the former refers to social categories, a set of persons marked by and distinguished by rules deciding membership and characteristic features, the latter conveys the idea of some distinguishing characteristic that a person takes pride in or is socially consequential but more or less unchangeable.

Therefore, identity is characterized by the commitments and identifications which provides the frame or horizon within which one determines from different contexts or situations what is good, valuable, or what ought to be done, or what one endorses or opposes. Among Yoruba couples, identity mirrors social categories and the sources of their self-respect and dignity. Within their daily interpersonal relations, the identifications that offer the frame to determine what is valuable, endorsed or opposed by them often come into conflict on several grounds. For example, men getting involved in domestic chores are socio-culturally incongruent with the features assigned to them within the Yoruba culture.

A significant area of interest to this study where such incongruence manifested was childcare. The uniqueness of Yoruba culture, in common with other cultures, creates expectations, which are symbolic and sometimes meaningless to outsiders but tenaciously held by them. Hence, there is consensus across various disciplines that identity differences are principal causes of conflict.⁴⁸⁸ The experiences of Yoruba

⁴⁸⁷ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin ‘Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity’ *International Organization* Vol. 54, Issue 4, Autumn 2000, pp. 845- 877.

⁴⁸⁸ Berry, J. W. *Cultural Relations in Plural Societies: Alternatives to Segregation and their Socio-Psychological Implications* In M. Brewer & N. Miller (eds.), *Groups in Contact* New York: Academic, pp. 11 - 27, 1984.

Christian couples in the NWE, therefore, offer a veritable platform for greater understanding and analysis of such conflict. The next section discusses the problem of identity in relation to childcare.

5.4.2 Identity, Childcare and Domestic Chores

‘In this country, you don’t know whether you are a man or woman because as a man you do all sort of housework’.⁴⁸⁹ This poignant claim typifies the attitudes of the majority of the male respondents. To them, women – rather than the government or men – are supposed to be responsible for children’s upbringing. The situation in which Yoruba men in the NWE found themselves exercising this role became a source of conflict. The problem of identity conflict, with special reference to childcare, was found across data. It will be discussed here from a sociocultural perspective, with particular focus on how it plays out among couples; the ethno-political or resource issues are beyond the scope of analysis here. As earlier noted, intercultural contact raises significant challenges for indigenes, immigrants and ethnic minority people in a multicultural society such as Britain. Thus, issues of one’s fundamental sense of self, individual’s core beliefs, values, behaviour and attitude of the host community enhance identity conflict. Baumeister, Shapiro and Tice see identity conflict as ‘the problem of the multiple defined self whose definitions have become incompatible’.⁴⁹⁰ To them, it can arise any time, especially when personal commitment entails contradictory behavioural expectations or prescriptions. To Yoruba men, the contradiction is located in the role expected from them within marital relations as practised in the NWE. As Respondent 17 put it, ‘I only started

⁴⁸⁹Interview excerpts from Respondent 1

⁴⁹⁰Baumeister, R., Shapiro, J. P., Tice, D. M. D. Two Kinds of Identity Crisis *Journal of Personality* 53, pp. 407-427, p. 408.

cooking and doing baby sitting in this country; I can't imagine myself doing such work in Nigeria'.

A number of male respondents (1, 4, 7, 16, 20, 21 and 22) were of the view that un-African practices around childcare in the NWE are: 1) the gender-role reversal that takes place when men become responsible for babysitting as well as carrying out other duties that centre on children; and 2) the question of who takes custody of the children in the event of marital breakdown or separation. A comment made by Respondent 1 is significant: 'being the head of the home, my wife and children are meant to be mine; yet in the UK, when there is a quarrel the woman is given the upper hand.' In this context, a woman respondent observed that: 'as long as we are living in England, I cannot leave my children once I am no more with my husband'.⁴⁹¹ This stresses the notion of who is in charge of the children, which, in the words of Respondent 1, is summed up in the idea of the 'upper hand' while the woman sees taking the custody of the children as her right. A study commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families captioned 'Impact of Family Breakdown on Children well-being: Evidence Review' states that:

A number of factors are associated with children's positive adjustment to family breakdown including competent and warm parenting, parents' good mental health, low parental conflicts, cooperating parenting post separation and social support. In general, children have fewer adjustment problems when the resident parent, usually the mother, does not have mental health problems and the quality of their parenting is not disrupted.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹¹Excerpts from Respondent 8

⁴⁹² Ann Mooney, Chris Oliver and Marjorie Smith, *Impact of Family Breakdown on Children's Well-being: Evidence Review Research Report DCSF-RR113* June 2009, p. 2.

The suggestion that ‘children have fewer adjustment problems’ when the ‘resident parent’ is the mother is of importance for the Yoruba diaspora. The male participants view the practice in which the woman assumes the position of ‘resident parent’ and subsequently takes custody of the children as a subtle way of wresting power from them. Similarly, that the non-resident parent, usually the father, may even lose the right of contact with his child/children makes an already contentious situation, to the men, worse. In this direction, Respondent 20 contended that: ‘such practice is not only un-African, it also makes women to be disrespectful to their husbands and eventually to throw them out of the house at the slightest provocation’. It is a vexing issue to the male respondents that children develop a higher regard for their mothers (women), which potentially undermines the traditional hegemonic structure of male dominance. Commenting further on the idea of equal right among couples, a male respondent stated thus:

It gets in women’s head and then they begin to misbehave instead of, at least, respecting their husband as Yoruba custom demands. They believe it is equal right and claim that whatever I want to do I can do because women are given more opportunities than men. So they use it against the men. I heard of some women: if their husbands should do anything, they will threaten to call the police.⁴⁹³

Apart from the contested right of women to take custody of children in the event of a relationship breakdown, other areas where personal commitment entails contradictory behaviours can become issues of intense identity conflicts –particularly in terms of expectations from children. Even though Yoruba couples may make conscious effort to instil their cultural values in their children, the evidence from the fieldwork indicated that children are more inclined to the prevailing social realities within the

⁴⁹³ Excerpt from Respondent 6.

English society. The comments of respondents 22, 2 and 7, respectively, are significant:

Indeed, it is the dream of every Yoruba man that his children will maintain their identity even in England.⁴⁹⁴

...life in Nigeria, family tradition is different from here. The way we bring our children up is another issue so totally different...life traditional, family traditional value and then the way children are brought up....

In Nigeria, there is freedom to control your family. You can even smack your children if they do anything wrong; but herein the UK, you cannot do that. If you do it, the children have been told to call the police. It actually makes you look stupid. It makes you to ask question about whether you have made the right decision coming to this country and raising children.

When conflict arises as a result of cultural commitments of parents, and thus produces contradictory behavioural expectations from children, parents often find themselves not only confused, but also conflicted between Yoruba culture and the prevailing social realities in the NWE. For example, Respondent 22 was particularly concerned about the absence of Yoruba values in his children: 'it is difficult for my children to *'dobale'*. This term expresses the Yoruba tradition of prostrating oneself while greeting elders. The practice of prostrating oneself is mandatory and synonymous with being a well-cultured Yoruba person. The reluctance of children to carry it out raised grave concern and sometimes-precipitated conflict among couples.

In summary, because the task of looking after children is regarded as a feminine occupation within the Yoruba culture, when men find themselves engaged in such a

⁴⁹⁴ Respondent 22 was particularly concerned about the absence of Yoruba values in his children and that his various attempts to return them to Nigeria have become another thorny issue between him and his wife.

task, it is viewed with disdain and regarded as belittling to men. This understanding explains why most Yoruba men struggle to participate in domestic chores, especially childcare. To buttress this, Respondent 1 claimed that: ‘charity, they said, begins at home so looking after children is the African woman’s job; that is why it is strange to me here in the UK.’ But a common argument among women is that, in contrast to their situation in Nigeria, their active financial involvement along with the stress on equality among couples in the NWE calls for renegotiation of marital roles and responsibilities. In the words of a female respondent:

If I now make good financial contributions to run our home and all the time I am at work like my husband, then common sense will tell him that housework should not be left for me alone, like is in Nigeria.⁴⁹⁵

In the same vein, another respondent argued that ‘women were solely tied to domestic works back home (Nigeria) because they were not actively engaged in formal income yielding activities.’ So, it is logical to argue that their male counterparts, through active participation in domestic chores, might complement the added financial responsibilities of Yoruba women. However, the reaction or response of Yoruba men to such a view will, to a large extent, influence spousal harmony among couples. Even though Yoruba society, in the words of Amba Oduyeye, a prominent African female scholar, is ‘a most male-centred community’,⁴⁹⁶ ‘the quest for human rights universally should be the preoccupation of African women and men and especially that of all people of faith’.⁴⁹⁷ When men exhibit such a mind-set and mutual cooperation, tensions in the home owing to identity conflict will be minimized. However, this expectation seems distant among most of the male respondents interviewed.

⁴⁹⁵ Excerpt from Respondent 2.

⁴⁹⁶ Mercy Amba Oduyeye Culture and the Quest for Women’s Rights in *African Culture and the Quest for Women’s Right* Dorcas Olu Akintunde (ed.), Ibadan: Sefer Books Ltd., 2001, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 3.

5.5 Financial Considerations and Decision-making Processes

A growing number of studies suggest that the promise and prospect of financial enhancement has remained one of the major propelling forces for contemporary immigration.⁴⁹⁸ While the preoccupation of this section is neither to validate nor refute this assertion, it notes that the interview findings indicated that an increase in the financial earnings of a spouse is vital in shaping the marital relationships among Yoruba couples. A critical question is: to what extent does financial independence serve as a means of women's empowerment and influence their marital relations? In discussing how greater income determines the extent of marital influence, resource and normative theories were proposed by Blood and Wolfe, and Jory and Yodanis, respectively. Much of the classical research in family decision-making relied on the resource theory model advanced by Blood and Wolfe.⁴⁹⁹ They examined associations between power inside the family and power outside the family, and claimed that power was apportioned between husbands and wives based on the resources that each contributed to the family. They primarily focused on the resources of income, occupational prestige, and educational attainment and argued that the greater the man's resources in these three areas, the greater his perceived power within the family.⁵⁰⁰

In considering the role played by a spouse's financial contributions, Reginald Peyton *et al.* see resource theory as a major contributor to the family decision-making

⁴⁹⁸ Ter Haar, Gerrie, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1998, p. 22. (2). Kwabena, Asamoah-Gyadu, 'African-led Christianity in Europe: Migration and Diaspora Evangelism' in *Lausanne World Pulse*. July 2008, p. 10. (3). Dapo Asaju 'Colonial Politicization of Religion: Residual Effects on the Ministry of African-led Churches in Britain' in Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock eds. *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: the Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage* London: Continuum, 2008, p. 281.

⁴⁹⁹ Brian Jory and Carrie L. Yodanis 'Power Family Relationships and Marital Relationships' *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family*, New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003. pp. 126-37.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p.204.

process.⁵⁰¹ The arguments of these author's concur with that of Blood and Wolfe, that financial contributions are the key determinant in decision-making role in the family. To them, this is of prime importance because it often indicates which spouse has the power, influence, or authority.⁵⁰² Similarly, it was overwhelmingly expressed by the male participants that the enhanced financial resources of Yoruba women in the NWE significantly increase their marital influence.

With focus on the resources of income, occupational prestige and educational attainment, it is logical to state that the greater the man's resources in these areas, the greater his perceived power within the family. This assertion is also applicable to women, especially in contemporary societies; unlike in traditional Yoruba societies, men or women do not become heads of households by divine right or biological determinism, but because they have more and easier access to educational, financial, and occupational resources in society.⁵⁰³

W. Hill and J. Scanzoni⁵⁰⁴ identify three major domains of power, which are relevant to decision-making between spouses. The first relates to resources that an individual contributes since that affects the ability to exercise power in a given decision-making situation.

The second domain is related to the power processes and focuses on the interaction of family members at various stages in the decision-making process. The third relates to

⁵⁰¹ Reginald Peyton, Sarah Pitts, and Rob H. Kamery 'A Review of Significant Consumer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction Models: The Family Decision-Making Process, *Academy of Family Business*', Vol. 1, No.12, Las Vegas: 2003, p. 9.

⁵⁰² Roger J. Baran 'Cultural Role Expectations, Husband-Wife Resources and Competence: Their Effect on Decision-Making Influence in Black and White Families in USA' *AFBE Journal* 3, 1, June 2010, pp.126 - 144.

⁵⁰³ Brian Jory and Carrie L. Yodanis 'Power, Family Relationships and Marital Relationships' *International Encyclopaedia of Marriage and Family*, New York: Macmillan 2003, p. 65.

⁵⁰⁴ Hill, W. & J. Scanzoni 'An Approach for Assessing Marital Decision-Making Processes' *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 1982, 11, 4, pp. 927 - 941.

power outcomes and focuses on who makes the final decision and who wins the discussion or argument.⁵⁰⁵ My interview findings revealed that the first domain is more applicable to Yoruba couples because financial empowerment, which the Yoruba, particularly women, experience in the NWE vitally, contributes to the perceived marital power. According to a female respondent, ‘since I started bringing money to the house, my husband sees me differently, unlike when we were in Nigeria.’⁵⁰⁶ The idea of her husband seeing her differently implies that she now has more say and power in England compared to when they were in Nigeria.

From a different cultural context, Jory and Yodanis argue that enhanced economic earning on the part of women does not necessarily result in any significant increase or decrease of their marital influence.⁵⁰⁷ However, consistent with Rodman’s normative resource theory, marital power is affected not only by the resource contribution of the parties in the marital equation, but also by cultural norms, which significantly affect spousal power.⁵⁰⁸ Consistent with this view, about half of the women participants held that financial empowerment or enhancement did not affect power relations in their marriages. From the Yoruba perspective, Oduyoye emphasises the dominance of cultural prescriptions within the Yoruba tradition. She posits that ‘African culture is replete with languages that enable the community to diminish the humanity of women. No amount of denial negates the fact that relationships between men and women are not all that they could be’.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁵*Ibid.* p. 933.

⁵⁰⁶Excerpts from Respondent 27.

⁵⁰⁷Jory and Yodanis, ‘Power, Family and Marital Relationships’ *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family* p. 68.

⁵⁰⁸*Ibid.* p.68.

⁵⁰⁹Oduyoye ‘Culture and the Quest for Women’s Rights’ in *African Culture and the Quest for Women’s Right*, p. 4.

However, the majority of the male participants maintained that the enhanced financial position of women in the NWE did, in fact, accord them greater marital influence. Respondent 10 asserted that: ‘she gets more money than I do; hence, she makes most of the decisions in this house’. In general, the key argument here is that the power of each spouse is directly dependent upon the extent to which that spouse contributes valued resources to the home. Hence, whether from the resource theory’s or normative theory’s perspectives, the influence that a spouse exerts in the family decision-making process depends on the economic resources contributed as well as on traditional patriarchal ideas. Furthermore, the unpopularity of traditional patriarchal sentiments in the UK implies that the amount of resources contributed becomes the main determinant of marital influence.

Given that over half of the women interviewed were gainfully employed and doubled as the breadwinners, their claim that their financial enhancement did not give them more power is problematic. In the views of Blood and Wolfe, there is strong association between ‘power inside the family and power outside the family.’⁵¹⁰ My fieldwork interviews indicated that Yoruba women contributed significant valued resources for family upkeep.⁵¹¹ A valued resource is seen as anything one partner makes available to the other, helping the latter satisfy his or her needs.⁵¹² In other words, women’s power outside the family has given them significant power inside the family. Respondents 22, 30 and 24 linked the dominance of their husbands within the Yoruba family to their roles as breadwinners. Ultimately, the financial

⁵¹⁰ Blood and Wolfe, *Husbands & Wives: The Dynamics of Married Living*, p. 126.

⁵¹¹ Unlike the Nigerian/Yoruba setting, where some women stay at home as full-time housewives, all the women participants in this study were vitally involved in active income generating employment. This offered them the opportunities of making financial contributions to their family upkeep. In other words, women power outside the family has significantly given them power inside the family.

⁵¹² Blood and Wolfe, p. 126.

empowerment of Yoruba women in the NWE needs to be seen from two opposite directions. On the one end, it has significantly improved the financial positions of many families; on the other end, it has become a source of tension and marital conflict.

5.6 Conclusion

The chapter examined how Yoruba couples in diaspora engaged with existing socio-cultural phenomena within their host community. It noted that the reshaping of the social and political landscape of modern societies and the subsequent emergence of new communities are largely due to the accelerating mobility across state-borders of people, resources and cultural products. The chapter argues that such intercultural contacts raise significant challenges for immigrants, indigenous and ethnic minority peoples in culturally plural societies like Britain. Issues of identity, social status and financial considerations were identified from the data and analysed.

It was noted that identity conflict among Yoruba couples arises from the perceptions that the host community prescribes incompatible values, behaviours and commitments. For example, Yoruba men found women's economic independence threatening to their dominant status; as a result, such financial empowerment impacts on marital stability. The argument was thus advanced that there is often an intense feeling of being torn between two cultural identities experienced by couples themselves, and by their children. Other findings indicated that: 1). A key significant difference among respondents was not on the issues of religion or spirituality but, rather, in the area of gender-role responsibility and the continual quest for equality; 2.) Men, in particular, seemed to find themselves in a state of cultural dilemma, due to

the absence of hierarchy, communality and clearly defined male headship of the family.

The above raises some crucial questions in order to understand Yoruba couples' struggle in identifying with the English culture, particularly in the NWE. First, how important is it for them to maintain their cultural heritage and traditions? Second, how important is it for them to participate in the wider society? A combination of the response to these questions resonates with Berry's acculturation categories: integration, separation, assimilation and marginalisation. As already argued, integration is the most preferred option, given its psychological and social outcomes even though it is not always achievable. So, the enthusiastic cultural inclinations of the Yoruba further beg the question: to what extent has cultural integration taken place among Yoruba couples? Further in-depth analyses on other traditional conventions (hierarchy, patriarchy and male dominance) and the effect of their paradigm shift among Diaspora Yoruba couples are examined in the fifth and sixth chapters, respectively.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERNAL ISSUES WITHIN DIASPORA YORUBA FAMILY

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the analyses but with special focus on the internal issues identified from the data, which include marital power relations, gender-role and Christian teaching. In order to obtain deeper understanding of how the day-to-day lives of the respondents and their approaches to meaning making are framed, I employed thematic and phenomenological approaches.

6.2 Marital Power Relations

Both the female and male respondents stressed the centrality of power in their marital relationships.⁵¹³ For Respondent 3, ‘the man is always in charge; otherwise, there will be trouble.’ A female respondent said ‘when we were growing up back in Nigeria, *papa* (father/husband) is the one that directs the home; everyone takes instruction from him. *Mama*(mother/wife) only follows his words.’⁵¹⁴ This affirmation buttresses the view that was expressed in chapter three, that despite Yoruba folk wisdom, parables or stories that praise women, affirm their power, adore their motherhood and empower them, the cultural notion of patriarchy and male dominance is still prevalent. Consequently, women’s subservient demeanour is not only equated with being a proper or cultured Yoruba woman, but also they are expected to translate such idea (of asymmetrical and hierarchical power relations) into any form of relationship, especially to their husband.

⁵¹³ Falola, T. and Childs, M. D. (eds.,) *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, pp.18 - 40 and 210 - 231.

⁵¹⁴ Interview excerpts from Respondent 2 conducted on the 20th March 2011 at Liverpool.

As already identified in chapter three, power, as a social and dynamic concept, has been applied in diverse forms and settings. Foucault notes its capillary and diffused nature;⁵¹⁵ yet it is an instrument of control. S. M. Luke argues that power is the ability to influence people's wishes and thoughts and make them want things that may not necessarily benefit them, for example, women supporting a patriarchal society. Of particular interest to the understanding of marital power among Yoruba couples are Foucault's and Luke's prepositions.⁵¹⁶ From the Yoruba traditional context, power is seen as an instrument of control or leadership. This view aligns with the hierarchical and patriarchal structure of traditional societies, where male superiority and control are accepted as normative.⁵¹⁷ An important question is: what happens when power is wrested from the man within a marital union?

Mikelle S. Omari-Obafemi, however, sees power relations differently; he observes that, within Yoruba society, women have historically maintained positions of power.⁵¹⁸ Their positions were not limited to the domestic sphere; they also manifest in economics, trade, politics, religion and other social responsibilities.⁵¹⁹ On the surface, it appears Obafemi advocates that power should be seen as a shared commodity among the Yoruba. This idea is more cosmetic than real because of the prevailing hierarchical structure. Hence, within traditional cultures, power relation between couples is both asymmetrical and complex.

⁵¹⁵M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed., by Colin Gordon, Brighton: Harvester, 1980, p. 142.

⁵¹⁶S. M. Luke 'Power: A Radical View' in *Power Critical Concepts* John Scott (ed.) London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 233-68.

⁵¹⁷Gerder Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 238-240.

⁵¹⁸ Chapter three deals extensively with the concept of power exercised by Yoruba women.

⁵¹⁹Mikelle S. Omari-Obafemi 'An Indigenous Anatomy of Power and Art: A New Look at Yoruba Women in Society and Religion' *Dialectical Anthropology*, 21, 1996 pp. 89-98.

In response to the question of decision-making, Respondent 2 (a woman) said: ‘now this is the problem; because the society in England advocates equality; the husband cannot always have the final say. So he cannot claim to be more superior to me.’ Another woman, Respondent 4, observed that: ‘In Nigeria, my husband, with or without my consent, mainly makes the decisions .But in the UK, it is not so; I sometimes make the decision.’ These comments indicate the likelihood of some factors that may lie deep beneath; they seem to demonstrate the sentiment of some Yoruba women concerning the extant marital power relations in the NWE, in contrast to the Nigerian setting.

To further illustrate that the above views are an integral aspect of the Yoruba culture, Respondent 3(a man), asserted that:

In the home in Nigeria, it is basically the husband that dictates the tone. I mean as regarding the finance or even how to direct the affairs in the house. But in the UK, it’s totally different...this power was ascribed to men by the Yoruba culture... the culture places men in charge naturally; hence, we are the ones taking decisions.

The above comments are relevant to understanding how Yoruba men view their traditional positions as husbands. The idea that the husband ‘dictates the tone’ and that ‘power was ascribed to men by Yoruba culture’ demonstrates the legitimization of the asymmetrical power relation within that particular culture. Thus, whenever such established power dynamic that couples is used to in Nigeria interacts with the socio-cultural realities in England; the result often leads to marital instability. A typical Yoruba husband sees his self-worth and dignity undermined if his wife

assumes a competing position.⁵²⁰ Respondent 1 (a man) buttressed this idea: ‘back home in Nigeria, my wife cannot ‘grow wings’ or speak-where I am speaking; otherwise, I am no more the man of the house’. To grow wings means to be disobedient, suggesting that a woman must be submissive. There is a Yoruba wise saying: ‘*eni to leru lo leru*’ (whosoever owns the slave owns the slave’s property).⁵²¹ Although women are not necessarily regarded as slaves, given the bride price that is paid on them,⁵²² the tendencies to objectify them are undeniable.

Conversely, English society, to a majority of my interviewees, appears more empowering than Yoruba society. Most of the male respondents were of the opinion that women were conferred with greater power in England than in Nigeria; hence, the tendency to challenge their husband’s authority. The following excerpt from Respondent 1 (male) is illuminating:

You see, I have been married now for eighteen years and coming to the UK has already changed my life because I can no longer stand on my feet. If I say, as a man, that I can no longer stand on my feet, I mean that I am faced with the challenge of not being able to control my home; women have grown wings because this is a society that favours them.

The phrase ‘I cannot stand on my feet’ does not indicate any form of physical ailment but suggests that in the respondent’s eyes women have more freedom in the UK to do whatsoever they like, challenge or usurp their husbands’ authorities. Also, Respondent 7 (male) asserted that: ‘women are to listen to their husband in Yorubaland, but the law has made all of us to be equal, and women are no longer

⁵²⁰ Please see: OshomhaI Moagene *Know Your Country Series: The Yoruba of Western Nigeria*, Ibadan: University Press, 1996, p. 41.

⁵²¹ Isaac O. Delano *Owe Lesin Oro; Yoruba Proverbs, their Meanings and Usage* Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1966, p.16.

⁵²² The idea of bride price is an integral aspect of tradition Yoruba marriage. A detailed account and implication of it will be given special focus in chapter five that deals with the traditional Yoruba concept of marriage.

regarding their husband ... coming to the UK takes your manhood from you. It actually makes you look stupid'. He stated further that:

The law of the land gives women more power to do. For example, if there is quarrel in the house and your wife call the police; the man will be asked to leave the house and there is nothing you can do. Back home, I take decision in my home. Even though I consult my wife, I still have the final say. But here in the UK, it's different. More so, my wife has a major role to play in the day-to-day decision-making in the family'.

Respondent 10:

Like in Nigeria you are in charge as the husband of the house, but here (England) you cannot say you are in charge because you have to pay your bills. Your wife is as good as you. You both are in charge. In a way, culturally speaking, you are less than a man in the home.

Respondent 12 had this to say:

When I was in Nigeria, most of the decisions were taken by me. Most times, I don't even get to ask my wife if this is right or wrong, I just say it and will get done. I don't normally ask if it is convenient for my wife and she too, she doesn't even complain; she just go along and do whatever I said and it has been like that until I came to England.

In the opinion of Respondent 21:

Well, you know, the majority of our women immediately they get to Europe, they try to do what they called 'if you are in Rome you try to do what Romans do'. They like to behave like Europeans because they know that they have power. So they can do and undo. In Nigeria they don't have that power. So here you can see our Yoruba women they will say, 'look, I don't want you to come home. Stay where you are' and you won't come home, but in Nigeria it will never happen.

These male respondents questioned what they saw as the undue support given to women by the government.⁵²³ Such attitude among men is consistent with Dorcas

⁵²³ One of the continuous and thorny problems in family sociology in recent years has been the discussion of conjugal power relations, particularly in cross-cultural work. Please see: William T. Liu, Ira W. Hutchison, Lawrence K. Hong, 'Conjugal Power and Decision Making: A Methodological Note on Cross-Cultural Study of the Family', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, No. 1, Jul., 1998, pp. 84-98.

Akintunde and Helen Labeodan's view that men accuse women of misleading other people by claiming that women are being oppressed, while, in the real sense, women are involved with 'un-African' practices.⁵²⁴ They further state that:

African women cannot prove that they are oppressed or violated. After all, there is no discrimination against them on the basis of their sex in our culture and religious practices. Some of them are only trying to imbibe western practices, which are un-African. In so doing, they will succeed in misleading others.⁵²⁵

Akintunde and Labeodan refute the notion that women's economic and religious power is eclipsed within the Yoruba culture; they debunk the view that there are socio-cultural barriers or structures inimical to women's empowerment. Although this view certainly does not reflect the consensus of the women participants and the wider Yoruba women in England, the idea of 'un-African practices' is significant.

Respondent 7 cited a typical example of such 'un-African practice': 'Women are given more power in the UK because if there is disagreement on certain minor or major issues in the house and the police intervene, the man is usually asked to leave the house.' However, given that in Yoruba society, the man is usually accepted as the head of the house, asking the man to leave the house is seen by men as ironical, which can best be described as a situation 'where a dog's tail wags the head.'⁵²⁶ Such view finds little sympathy and remains unacceptable in the NWE, where democratic sentiments and equality condition interpersonal relationship.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ Dorcas Akintunde and Helen Labeodan *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa*, Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer Press, 2002, p. 11.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁵²⁶ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, London: Penguin, 1999, p.47. A similar Yoruba wise saying that captures the idea of an un-African practice states thus: '*Ko le buruburu fun baba, kolodowo omo oun to wa lorun*' (no matter how difficult it becomes for the father he cannot take instructions from his children. Otherwise, such practice is not merely un-African, but also a taboo within Yoruba society.

⁵²⁷ Equality, Rights and Citizenship: http://www.gov.uk/government/topics/equality-rights_and_citizenship. accessed, May 2016.

This research also questioned the claim made by several male respondents that the economic empowerment of their wives, through payment of bills and other financial responsibilities, has made them rivals. Such view appears too simplistic because, in Nigeria, there are instances where women are significantly involved in handling financial responsibilities and still remain submissive to their husbands.⁵²⁸ The argument here is that a number of middle/upper-middle class women in Nigeria submit to their husbands in spite of their positions. So, apart from financial empowerment, other considerations, such as environmental and cultural factors, influence marital power equation.

6.3 Gender-role Reversal

The problem of role reversal is a major concern and a source of marital crisis among Yoruba couples. Most of the women interviewed affirmed that, while they were in Nigeria, they were not engaged in any income-yielding activity. Respondent 2 asserted that: 'In Yoruba society, the woman is supposed to be at home; food is ready when the father of the house comes in.' Respondent 5, describing her role as a wife back in Nigeria, observed that: 'Normally back home when you are married, the woman has to do everything; you have to cook, even if you come back from work at the same time with your husband, it doesn't matter you have to go to the kitchen to prepare the food while he will sit down.'

Respondent 7(male) corroborated Respondent 5 thus: 'a woman's responsibility in Nigeria is to look after the kids, prepare food and make everybody in the family comfortable.'

⁵²⁸ Alyssa Qualls 'Women in Nigeria Today' *African Postcolonial Literature in English in the Postcolonial Web*, www.postcolonialweb.org/nigeria/contwomen.html accessed May 2016

The above views are consistent with the assertion of Olumuyiwa Familusi and Olusegun Oke:

Every member of the family has specific roles to play towards ensuring harmony both in the family and in the wider society. Some of these roles are mutually exclusive while some are gender and age based. Roles of women in traditional African societies are unique.⁵²⁹

Gender is a main philosophy within which descriptions or scripts are created.⁵³⁰ It involves the ‘construction of masculinity and femininity as polar opposites and the essentializing of the resulting differences’.⁵³¹ Mary Crawford avers that, ‘within the discourse of gender, certain traits, behaviours, and interests are associated with each sex and assumed to be appropriate for people of that sex.’⁵³² As young boys and girls begin to grow up, they begin to accept gender distinctions visible at the structural level and enacted at the interpersonal level as part of the self-concept. They become gender type, ascribing to themselves the traits, behaviours, and roles normative for people of their sex in their culture.⁵³³

To my respondents, the word gender implies an individual as male or female, and derives from the individual’s biological attribute. They affirmed that the word gender extends these physical attributes to create an ideological construct that is based on the way that society understands those biological differences between men and women. Equally, B. Haddad states that:

⁵²⁹ Olumuyiwa Olusesan Familusi and Olusegun Peter Oke, ‘Changing Roles of Yoruba Women as an Issue in National Development and Family Stability’ *LUMINA* 23 (2), p. 1.

⁵³⁰ Alcoff, Linda Martin *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 18

⁵³¹ Mary Crawford *Talking Difference on Gender and Language*, London: Sage Publications, 1995, p.13.

⁵³² *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁵³³ *Ibid*, p. 16.

Gender refers to the socially constructed and culturally defined differences between men and women. A gender analysis always identifies the relationship between the sexes in terms of power relations. Gender influences the differences in poverty levels between the sexes because social institutions such as the family, religion, culture and education discriminate against women.⁵³⁴

Judith Lorbe notes that ‘gender is an institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, built into the major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, family and politics, and is also an entity in and of itself’.⁵³⁵ A radical feminist view claims that gender is a ‘worldwide system of domination of women by men through control of women’s sexuality and procreative capacity’.⁵³⁶ This view agrees with Crawford’s position that ‘men have more public power in most societies, controlling government, law, public discourse, and academia’. All these imply that, from society’s point of view, one’s gender is usually the touchstone, the normal, and the dominant; and the other is different, deviant, and subordinate.⁵³⁷

There are contentions that the term ‘gender’ originated from Western European epistemologies and actually misinterpreted African women realities. Oyeronke Oyewunmi sees gender as a Western construct and argues that it is based on ‘binary biological categories that are inappropriate to Yoruba society’.⁵³⁸ The work questions the usefulness of gender as an ‘analytical category and its hegemonic influence on African knowledge production, the identity of women, marriage and bride wealth,

⁵³⁴ Haddad B. Theologizing Development: A Gendered Analysis of Poverty, Survival and Faith. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 110, 2001: pp. 5-19.

⁵³⁵ Judith lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender*, London: Yale University Press, 1994. p.1.

⁵³⁶ Faith Roberson Elliot *The Family: Change or Continuity*, p. 106.

⁵³⁷ Mary Crawford, *Talking Difference on Gender and Language*. 14

⁵³⁸ Oyeronke Oyěwùní, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 14.

division of labour, women's control of property and women's sexuality.'⁵³⁹ She dismisses the relevance of the concept to African existence because of its rootedness in Western gender discourse.⁵⁴⁰ Oyewumi's submissions leave more questions than answers, especially in view of 'division of domestic labour, sexuality, fertility, child rearing, household economy and conflict resolution strategies among the Yoruba.'⁵⁴¹ However, the classical cultural theory views gender-role attitudes as an integral element of any culture.⁵⁴² Phyllis Hallenbeck argues that, in most cultures, specific roles are assigned to men and women, depending on the perceived cultural relevance and structure. She posits that 'the cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity, the legal tradition of husband as family head and the Judeo-Christian concept of the superiority of the husband are the factors contributing to this reality.'⁵⁴³ Safilios-Rothschild Consantina maintains that assigned gender roles directly correlate with the position that husbands and wives play in family decision-making.⁵⁴⁴

H. B. Danesh observes that the ways women are treated in the family have been frequently 'justified in the context of cultural norms, religious beliefs and unfounded scientific theories and assumptions.'⁵⁴⁵ The great 'majority of families in all societies and cultures have been under fortification of male dominance and power.'⁵⁴⁶ He adds that:

⁵³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 15.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 15.

⁵⁴² Dejun Su, Chad Richardson and Guang-zhen Wang 'Assessing Cultural Assimilation of Mexican American: How Rapidly do their Gender-Role Attitudes Converge to the U.S. Mainstream?' *Social Science Quarterly* Vol. 91, Number 3, Sept. 2010, pp. 762-773.

⁵⁴³ Phyllis N. Hallenbeck, 'An Analysis of Power Dynamics in Marriage' *Journal of Marriage and Family* 28, 2, May 1966, p. 202.

⁵⁴⁴ Safilios-Rothschild, Consantina, 'The Study of Family Power Structure: A Review 1960-69' *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, November 1990, p. 17.

⁵⁴⁵ H. B. Danesh, *The Violence-Free Family: Building Block of Peaceful Civilization*, Canada: Ottawa: Bahá'í Studies Publications, 1995, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3

Male power has been, and still is, exercised in respect to all aspects of the female family members' lives –controlling their educational rights and privileges, their sexual wishes and preferences, their social opportunities and status, their economic well-being and independence, their personal freedoms and responsibilities, and their spiritual standing and aspirations.⁵⁴⁷

The changes and subsequent impacts of the role of Yoruba couples in the NWE could be seen from two perspectives. First, many of the female respondents argued that role reversal has made them to exercise 'equal right'.⁵⁴⁸ To them, changes in role have inadvertently empowered Yoruba women. In the words of Respondent 8, 'in Africa women don't have the opportunity to develop themselves because men believe that, whatever it is, a woman will end up in the kitchen, and that is the job of the woman. But here in the UK, women are allowed to work, exercise right, develop career and move on in life.' Such development tends to reduce the male/female cultural divide that usually characterizes the typical Yoruba marriage.

Second, all the male respondents maintained that gender-role reversal has made their wives to become arrogant and un-African in their attitudes and practices at home. Respondent 1, commenting on this, affirmed that: 'Back home in Nigeria, there is a lot of respect. But coming to the UK, there is no longer respect. My wife decides on what she wants to do, when she wants to and how she wants to do it...not being able to give directive in your own home affects me as a person'. The issues in question here relate to women becoming more vocal and not demonstrating the traditional expectations, such as kneeling before the husband, as a form of greeting, willingness

⁵⁴⁷*Ibid*, p.3.

⁵⁴⁸The idea that the British society accords men and women equal right was particularly prominent in the interviews; responses of Respondents 4, 6, 8, 11, 15, 19 and 29.

to consult with the husband before making decisions, and never addressing the husband directly by his first name.

The views expressed by the male respondents are understandable because the issue of gender-role difference that is taken as given in Yoruba culture is less conspicuous within the contemporary Western societies.⁵⁴⁹ Olajubu opines that Yoruba society, in common with other African societies, is essentially patriarchal, characterized by male superiority and female subjugation. Therefore, ‘socially, politically, economically and religiously, women are, to a very large extent, disadvantaged’.⁵⁵⁰ Hence, it is logical to argue that Yoruba men have been shaped by such asymmetrical views even in spite of their social and religious beliefs or relocation to the NWE. Therefore, that a number of the male respondents were inclined to maintain the status quo can best be seen as expression of a deep-rooted cultural orientation rather than a logical engagement with extant social realities in England. Oduyoye avers that ‘although imagery of gender equality is recognizable within genres of African culture, they superficially convey an appearance of egalitarianism, however they conceal male chauvinist ideology, practices and dominion’.⁵⁵¹

In contrast to Nigerian society where men are usually the breadwinners, in England, all the women respondents were engaged in professional jobs, like teaching, nursing and other allied professions that empowered them economically.⁵⁵² Through such

⁵⁴⁹ For further reading on the complex nature of gender role difference in the UK, please see: Rosalind Gill, ‘Culture and Subjectivity in Neo-Liberal and Post-Feminist Times’ *Subjectivity* 2009, 25, pp. 432-445 and Stephanie Joyce Taylor ‘Negotiating Oppositions and Uncertainties: Gendered Conflicts in Creative Identity Work’ *Feminism and Psychology* 3, 21, 2011, pp. 8-21.

⁵⁵⁰ Oyeronke Olajubu, *Identity, Power, and Gender Relations in Yoruba Religious Traditions* New York: University of New York Press, 2003, p. 65.

⁵⁵¹ Mary Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, New York: Orbis Books, 1995, p. 3.

⁵⁵² Helen Allan and John Aggergaard Larsen, ‘We Need Respect’: Experiences of Internationally Recruited Nurses in the UK’, European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences University of Surrey,

professional platforms, they are also accorded the privilege by UKBA to sponsor their family members (particularly their husbands) to the UK. However, a number of these men who relocated to England were unable to either secure white-collar jobs that reflect their qualifications or get positions that are similar to their employment status back in Nigeria.

It is clear from the foregoing that most of the female respondents played the role of visa sponsors as well as the breadwinners; thus, the men became their dependants.⁵⁵³

A male participant (Respondent 3) asserted that: 'I joined my wife in the UK after two years of her relocation. She works as a nurse, earn more than I do, and since my arrival in the UK, I have not been able to work as a qualified person. Rather, I do casual jobs'. In most cases, the man stays at home caring for their children and performing other household chores. Thus, the roles that were reserved for women in Nigeria now become either shared or are the responsibilities for the man. Such role reversal is equally seen as un-African. It is seen as belittling among the Yoruba that a man would perform a role/task that is culturally reserved for women. In the light of this, one can understand why the majority of the male respondents seriously took issue with gender-role reversal. A fitting way to summarize the complexity of gender-role reversal is from Olajubu's position, that, 'at the centre of gender relations among Yoruba are issues of power and how humans are affected by it'.⁵⁵⁴

July 2003, p. 2.

⁵⁵³The words 'dependant' and 'sponsor' within the context of UK immigration law have some technical meaning and implication beyond the common usage. These words are employed in this research based on the meaning accorded them by UKBA as: A dependant could be spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parents or someone who depends on you for care; you take responsibility for their being in the country. A sponsor implies an individual or organization that has the legal permission to bring a migrant into the country; thus, such migrant(s) become(s) known as dependants. For further explications of these terms, please see: www.gov.uk/timeoff-for-dependant/your-right

⁵⁵⁴ Olajubu, *Identity, Power, and Gender Relations in Yoruba Religious Traditions* p. 65.

6.4 Religious Faith/Christian Teaching

To speak of Christian teaching in a uniform sense is synonymous to the view that biblical textual interpretations adopt the same methods or principles. Therefore, to navigate such weakness, one must recognize that Christians adhere to different doctrinal positions, particularly in terms of marriage and divorce.

This section deals with the views and roles of religious and Christian teaching of my interviewees in their marital experiences. The role of religion in family life is significant because, in the absence of cultural underpinnings, religious beliefs, allegiance and orientations, it becomes a point of reference as well as the source of authority. The scripture and Christian teaching becomes the guiding light for faith and practices. This view is equally applicable to other immigrant couples, since ‘religious beliefs, practice, and community exert an important influence in the lives of many American immigrant communities particularly for those who are married and have families’.⁵⁵⁵ Dollahite and Goodman assert that couples’ perceptions of God being involved in their marriages are correlated with greater marital satisfaction.⁵⁵⁶ Existing empirical researches indicate that religious homogeneity is a significant factor in marital stability.⁵⁵⁷

For example, Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430), a very influential and prolific Catholic theologian, proposed the idea of indissolubility of marriage –marriage cannot be dissolved under any circumstance.⁵⁵⁸ He argued that marriage created a sacramental

⁵⁵⁵David C. Dollahite and Allan J. Hawkins Something More: the Meanings of Marriage for Religious Couples in America *Marriage and Family Review* Vol. 48, pp. 339 - 362.

⁵⁵⁶Goodman, M. A. and D. C. Dollahite How Religious Couples Perceive the Influence of God in their Marriage *Review of Religious Research* 48, pp. 141 - 155.

⁵⁵⁷Lambert, N. M. and G. C. Dollahite The Threefold Cord: Marital Commitment in Religious Couples *Journal of Family Issues* 29, pp. 592- 614.

⁵⁵⁸John Witte Jr. *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion and Law in the Western Tradition* Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1972, p. 22.

and sacred bond between a man and a woman – it is permanent.⁵⁵⁹ Augustine's thought became definitive for the Catholic Church, even to the contemporary, in that valid marriages were pronounced indissoluble.⁵⁶⁰

While the Protestants refute the Catholic stance on marriage as a sacrament, alongside the doctrine of indissolubility,, they maintain that marriage is permanent and indissoluble from a different perspective. Martin Luther opined that the freely given promise to marry creates 'a valid, indissoluble marriage before God and the world.'⁵⁶¹ Like Luther, John Calvin (1509-1564) argued that 'marriage, once properly contracted, consecrated and celebrated, was presumed permanent.'⁵⁶² In the same vein, Karl Barth (1886-1968), a Reformed Protestant theologian, contended that 'marriages are permanent, but only those that are instituted by God.'⁵⁶³

Only those marriages that God never brought together in the first place are dissoluble. Luther's and Calvin's views on marriage substantially shaped and formed contemporary protestant theology.⁵⁶⁴ And the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) endorses this view, viz:

The convention recognizes monogamy, the union of natural man to natural woman, as the ideal state of family life according to the New Testament. This convention places on record its adherence thereto. However, no person who has confessed Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord shall be denied baptism, church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper; but no member of the Church who is polygamist shall hold any Church office or position.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 22.

⁵⁶⁰ Wioleta Polinska 'Till Death Do Us Part'? Buddhist Insights on Christian Marriage' *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 30, 2010, pp. 29-40

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid*, 56.

⁵⁶² Hartmann Grisar *Luther* London: Kegan Paul Publisher, 2015 pp.173-189.

⁵⁶³ Karl Barth *Church Dogmatics* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961, p.58.

⁵⁶⁴ Max L. Stackhouse 'Covenantal Marriage: Protestant Views and Contemporary life' John Witte and Eliza Ellison Ed. *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective* Cambridge: Eerdmans Publisher, 2005, pp. 153-181.

⁵⁶⁵ *The Constitution and Regulations of the Nigerian Baptist Convention* Ibadan, Nigeria: Baptist Press Ltd. 2013, p. 6.

It is mandatory for all Baptists to marry under the marriage ordinance in order to protect the interest of the living spouse.⁵⁶⁶

A divorcee pastor cannot provide to others the model example of a Christian marriage, which he should preach, teach and exemplify; therefore, divorcee persons do not qualify to serve as pastors. And therefore, shall not be considered for ordination by the Nigerian Baptist Convention⁵⁶⁷

The NBC's stance on marriage is succinctly demonstrated from the above; it advocates a non-compromising and conservative view with regard to the permanence of marriage. It specifically notes that marriage, as an 'ordinance,' should be binding on members; once commitment is made by couples, the implication should be life-long. Although pastors and deacons are singled out from other members – 'divorcee persons do not qualify to serve as pastors' – in practice, even members are dissuaded from resorting to divorce. To further underscore the unacceptability of divorce within the NBC, any member that engages in it loses her/his right standing in the local church because such an individual is denied the opportunity to serve in any formal/official position.

The point to be noted from the foregoing is that identification and belonging to a specific Christian church denomination, to a large extent, determines the nature of the responses to marital challenges and difficulties by the Yoruba couples in the North West of England. For instance, Respondent 7 noted that: 'I think the church teaching on marriage is really helping a lot; else we might have been divorced by now if not for the fact that we know God'. Yaxin Lu et al. assert that a number of empirical studies have shown that shared religious beliefs and practices generally have

⁵⁶⁶ *Policies and Practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention* Ibadan, Nigeria: Baptist Press Ltd., 2013, p. 8.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 8.

significant positive influences on marital stability and commitment.⁵⁶⁸ This is consistent with responses from all the participants, as captured in the views of Respondents 3 and 13:

We are able to sit down and dialogue because we are Christians and because of what we listen to in the church on how husband and wife can relate together without having problem in the family.

Its just God. When you trust God, He will always be there for you. We have our up and down. We have our own problem, we sit down, we read the Bible and we apply the Bible into our marriage.⁵⁶⁹

So far, it has been noted that the Christian teachings/religious beliefs among the Yoruba couples interviewed served as a harmonizing factor. However, it is important to ask whether the religious commitment of the Yoruba couples has translated into trouble-free marital relations.

There are challenges that confront members of faith communities. As Marks and Dollahite affirm, although religious communities offer social, emotional, spiritual, financial and temporal support, faith communities are involved in conflict and other challenges.⁵⁷⁰ Faith communities often develop a type of family bond, but certain responsibilities and behavioural norms are expected from members. There are instances when personal commitment produces contradictory behavioural expectations or prescriptions. The resultant behaviour falls below expectation; this is transferred to other spheres of life and relationships. The argument in this section is that, notwithstanding such negative tendencies like domestic violence, marital

⁵⁶⁸Yaxin Lu, Loren D. Marks, Olena-Nesteruk, Michael Goodman and Loredana Apavaloaje Faith Conversion and Challenge: a Qualitative Study of Chinese Immigrant Christian Marriage in the USA *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 44, 2, pp. 227- 247.

⁵⁶⁹These comments are excerpts from Respondents 3 and 13, respectively.

⁵⁷⁰Goodman, M. A. and D. C. Dollahite How Religious Couples Perceive the Influence of God in their Marriage. *Review of Religious Research* 48, pp. 141 - 155.

unfaithfulness and lack of empowerment, religious beliefs and practices significantly influence the family life of Yoruba Christian couples in the NWE.

6.4 The use of Specific/Religious languages by Respondents

Language as an integral part of culture not only serves as a means of communication and expression but also conveys identity, a sense of belonging, meaning making and uniqueness. In a study ‘the significance of language as a tool of communication’, Sirbu Anca notes that language distinguishes a particular people group and their way of life, and establishes their historicity.⁵⁷¹ S. A. Dada acknowledges the relevance of language, but cautions that its complex nature lends its self to be misconstrued, especially by those that lack adequate background or contextual insight.⁵⁷² Consequently, the religious arena can be regarded as a veritable platform for misunderstanding, particularly because of its specialist and often-ambiguous meanings. Such possibilities underscore the need to offer certain clarifications in relation to how the respondents employed the agency of words in expressing their marital experiences.

An instance of note is in relation to respondent 8. When discussing the potential of prayer to help in resolving marital conflicts, she turned to religious language: ‘In some churches they do couple’s programme and some they do women’s programme because some trouble that husbands and wives face is always caused by Satan.’ Here she is identifying a non-human spiritual cause for the breakdown of human

⁵⁷¹ Anca, Sirbu ‘The Significance of Language as a Tool of Communication *Naval Academy Scientific Bulletin* Vol. Xviii, Issue 2, 2015, pp. 405 406.

⁵⁷² S. A. Dada ‘Language Contacts and Language Conflicts: the Case of Yoruba English Bilinguals’ *Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics* Vol. 29, 2007, pp. 85 -113.

relationships, and uses the language of the Christian tradition. However, there is a deeper Yoruba instinct at work here. Her conception of Satan strikes a crucial resonance with the traditional Yoruba belief that any physical occurrence is always the result of a precipitating spiritual force.⁵⁷³ Hence the marital instabilities experienced by couples might be the result of an outside spiritual agent. Her choice of words tells us about her underlying belief-system, and her sense that spiritual problems need spiritual solutions. Hence, to relate and show an understanding of where she is coming from requires that an understanding of the underlying Yoruba and religious traditions that feed into her language is vital. This is not a figure of speech for her, but expresses a deep conviction of reality. To deal with the identified spiritual problem, prayer has to be part of the solution.

In a similar vein, respondent 10 asserts: ‘coming to England has robbed me of my manhood.’ Nothing can be as potentially misleading as this form of expression; indeed it is not only ambiguous but also confusing. When further clarification was sought, it became clear that the reference was not to sexuality, or to the body but to masculinity and power.⁵⁷⁴ Commenting further on the intricate role of language, another female respondent queries: ‘if I now make good financial contributions to run our home and all the time I am at work like my husband, then common sense will tell him that household work should not be left for me alone, like is in Nigeria’. Such statement at best, mirrors her rationale or justification for gender role reversal among couples in the UK; however the possibility of losing its implications abounds in the absence of adequate background knowledge.

⁵⁷³ Bolaji Idowu Olodumare: *God in Yoruba Belief*, Ibadan: University Press, 1962, p.90.

⁵⁷⁴ Chapter two offers in-depth explication on the dynamism of language and how they play out especially within cultural and religious discourses.

In sum, the use of language by participants is always enshrined in cultural and religious undertone and these were appropriately given their corresponding clarifications within the context they were used so as to avoid further ambiguity in this study.

6.5 Conclusion

The chapter and the previous analysed 30 interviews (11 males and 19 females), out of which 3 were divorcees. They were selected on the bases of their cultural background, as Yoruba, marital experiences and the fact that they had lived in the NWE for a minimum of two years. The analysis largely revealed that the difficulties associated with marital relations among Yoruba couples are numerous, multifaceted and complex. It is, however, significant that the major difference in terms of responses is not in subscribing to the same religious conviction or spirituality. Indeed, as Christians, all the participants shared similar religious tradition; the identifiable difference is in their attitude towards the socio-cultural realities in their present environment.

The inability of Yoruba men to adequately engage their traditional understanding of power with current socio-cultural realities in Britain raises enormous challenges, which impact marital harmony. Hence, even before any mundane issue arises, most husbands see their self-image, worth and position threatened. Such practices have weighty implications for marital stability. Arising from the cultural orientations of the Yoruba couples living in the North West of England, along with the prevailing social realities, most of their marriages have become problematic because of their

inability to strike a critical balance between their original roles in Nigeria and what they experience in the NWE.

The chapter equally noted that economic mobility and the professional achievements of immigrants in culturally plural societies, in this instance Yoruba women, conceal underlying conditions of marital instability. Hence, many of them are in a state of cultural limbo and dilemma, dangling between Nigerian and British cultures. In this regard, a number of key findings are illuminating. First, the hierarchical power structure of traditional societies (Yoruba, in particular) serves as a cohesive factor for social interaction, inter-personal relations and harmony. In spite of the critiques of hierarchy as limiting and debilitating, it has remained an indispensable and a defining element within the Yoruba psyche. The absence of such structure opens an array of socio-cultural and marital conflicts among the diaspora communities.

Second, the inability of Yoruba couples to transcend their traditional understanding of marital relations in the face of contemporary social realities in England is problematic. For example, the stress on equality or collegiality among couples and the socio-economic empowerment of women imply that women's power outside the family has given them power inside the family. And power inside the family is intrinsically linked to power outside the family. It is important for couples to understand such dynamics because a number of immigrant women are continuously exploring the social structures that promote economic mobility and equality among men and women within the British society. As Sheba George points out: 'when

women come first, the power dynamics within marital relations, often than not, shifts to their advantage'.⁵⁷⁵

Third, there is the need for greater awareness, participation and engagement with the prevailing social realities in England by Yoruba couples in order to facilitate peaceful relations and mutual integration. Another significant outcome of the analysis is that the financial empowerment of Yoruba women in Britain undoubtedly affects the power equation in the family. The resource theory 'suggests that opening up women's access to resources outside the family could result in a more evenly balanced distribution of power within the family; and, in turn, could accord the necessary power to women based on the resources that they contribute to the family'.⁵⁷⁶

Overall, the contributions of this chapter are that there is the need for renegotiation of marital power relations beyond the existing structures and norms of Yoruba cultural orientations. More importantly, gender-role responsibilities, power relations between couples, social structures and orientations that accentuate women's rights and independence along with the absence of an established socio-cultural hierarchy are the key issues precipitating marital instability among diaspora Yoruba Christian couples. To explicate the above, a further examination of three salient theological themes that emanated from the finding is undertaken in the next chapter.

⁵⁷⁵Sheba George *When Women comes First: Gender and Transnational Migration*, p. 18.

⁵⁷⁶ Duncan Thomas, Dante Contreras, Elizabeth Frankenberg Distribution of Power Within the Household and Child Health
<http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/www/external/labor/FLS/IFLS/papers/distpow.pdf> accessed May 4th, 2015.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF KEY THEMES

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines three key themes from the theological perspective of NBC. NBC theological interpretation and analysis is based on hermeneutical principles⁵⁷⁷ and methodology. This method relies principally on the literal meaning of text rather than its historicity. In justification of this method, Osadolor Imasogie,⁵⁷⁸ a pioneer NBC theologian and pastor, argues that, ‘the norm and source of theology in Africa should take due cognizance of the word of God as mediated by the Holy Spirit, the word of God as recorded in the scriptures, the theological heritage of the church and the cultural and world view of the targeted audience’. Also, ‘all theological formulations bear the imprints of the cultural and contextual heritage of the theologian (...) and that every man’s perception is influenced by his cultural world view, his apprehension of Christ must inevitably be affected by that world view’.⁵⁷⁹

I used the synchronic hermeneutical approach to analyse three key themes, namely: hierarchical power structure, male dominance and cultural conflict for the following reasons: First, it will serve as a necessary approach for spiritual, didactic and marital enrichment for Yoruba Christian couples. Second, such exercise will elicit the needed scriptural perspectives on the findings and thus encourage adherence, especially considering the centrality of the Bible to Yoruba couples. The last relates to meeting the pastoral needs of traumatised couples.

⁵⁷⁷ James Barr ‘The Synchronic, The Diachronic and the Historical: A Triangular Relationship’ *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, New York: Clearance Centre, 1995, pp. 1-14.

⁵⁷⁸ Osadolor Imasogie *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* Ibadan: Baptist Press Ltd., 1985, p.60.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 68.

7.2 Hierarchy

The idea of hierarchy suggests a pecking order or chain of command, whereby the individual at the helm of affairs dictates to those at the bottom. In any discussion about cultural groups, one might adequately describe it as the dominance of one individual or group over another. An example, the superiority of men over women, solely on the basis of gender, age or position.⁵⁸⁰ Patti Lather views hierarchy as perpetuating male dominance and superiority at the expense of undermining the identity or contributions of women.⁵⁸¹ Also, Mary Amba Oduyoye notes that ‘African culture is replete with languages that enable the community to diminish the humanity of women (....) We may cry against this exposure (....) No amount of denial negates the fact that relationships between men and women are not all that they could be’⁵⁸² are significant in understanding the traditional Yoruba social structure, especially in terms of interpersonal relations.

Other social scientists and commentators have expressed contrasting views, contending that hierarchy as a socio-political system and process of human relations serves as a cohesive factor because it obliges people to behave or act in a stipulated fashion.⁵⁸³ The ‘orientation towards authoritarian benevolent relationship’⁵⁸⁴ is crucial in furthering the views of the pro-hierarchy agitators in the Yoruba setting.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁰ Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 227 - 262.

⁵⁸¹ Patti Lather *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern* London: Routledge, 1991, pp. xv - 9.

⁵⁸² Oduyoye, ‘Culture and the Quest for Woman’s Rights’, p. 6

⁵⁸³ Emiola Nihinlola ‘What Does this Mean? A Theological Approach to the Bewilderment, Amazement and Perplexity of Pentecostalism’ in *Pentecostalism, the Charismatic’s and African Initiatives in Christianity Ogbomosho Journal of Theology*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2008, pp. 134-143, p.138.

⁵⁸⁴ According to Ewiwilem, the term ‘orientation towards benevolent authoritarian relationship’ ‘underscores a cultural idea in most part of Africa but more specifically within the Nigerian context, that places value of respect for the elders by the young ones and at the same time obliges the elders to

Although there is no explicit or categorical position in the Bible about hierarchy in marriage, Christians of various doctrinal stances have established views based on their theological dispositions. Emiola Nihinlola, the President of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho, argues that Christian theology interprets God's revelation within the tradition of a church and human experiences. And this interpretation occurs from a particular worldview.⁵⁸⁶ In other words, a person's context shapes theological presuppositions. The theological tradition of the Nigerian Baptist Convention illustrates this point. It traces its origin to the congregational polity of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵⁸⁷ Here, not a single leader, but the entire congregation makes a decision, as reflected in the ministry of the early deacons to the Hebrew and Greek widows (Acts 6:1-3) and in the decisions of the first Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:24-29).

Although there are various interpretations of the above texts,⁵⁸⁸ to the NBC, what the apostles demonstrated in the two instances above suggests collegiality, empowerment as well as participation.⁵⁸⁹ In other words, they so empowered the local church to the extent that members were deemed capable of making informed

be responsible for the welfare of the young. This type of notion is a culture, which has become ingrained in the psyche of the African person. Thus, by extension, it instinctively either consciously or otherwise colours every form of relationship among Africans. This idea is what the saying often implies: Africans are hierarchically inclined. Please see: Joe Nkem Ewiwilem 'Pastoral Counseling: A Tool for Spiritual Growth and Maturity among Member of the Nigerian Baptist Convention' PhD Thesis University of Liverpool, 2011, p. 125.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 116-136.

⁵⁸⁶ Nihinlola 'What Does this Mean? A Theological Approach to the Bewilderment, Amazement and Perplexity of Pentecostalism' p. 139.

⁵⁸⁷ Ademola Ishola 'Rediscovering and Fostering Unity in the Body of Christ in Nigeria: the Nigerian Baptist Perspective' in *Rediscovering and fostering Unity: the Nigerian Experience* Eds. Ademola Ishola and Deji Ayegboyin Lagos, Nigeria: Sceptre Print Limited, 2000, p.124. Copeland, E. Luther. *The Southern Baptist Convention and the Judgment of History: The Taint of an Original Sin*. New Jersey: **Rowman and Littlefield Publishers**, 2002, p18.

⁵⁸⁸ As already observed, the researcher is aware of the multiplicity of interpretations among different Christian bodies and scholars.

⁵⁸⁹ Obaloluwa Osuolale *Christian Deacons* Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2005, p17.

decisions. Four of my respondents grew up in a congregation that uses democratic principles to make weighty decisions. They claimed that their churches were autonomous and self-governing. To a large extent, such arrangement has a strong affinity with the concept of political democracy by advocating participation and power sharing.

The NBC polity is summarised below:

In the Baptist denomination, there is no opportunity for assumption of authority by a few; if it were desired, all meet on board, even platform of equality. The rich, the poor, the minister, deacons and the people are all brethren, the pastor is no more and the poorest member is no less, than one of the brethren. On all question, every member of the church has an equal right to speak and vote. In a Baptist church there is perfect equality.⁵⁹⁰

A vital distinguishing feature of this type of church government is the absence of hierarchical structure along with leaders appointed from outside the local congregation. Wayne Grudem notes that such hierarchical system is common within the Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches⁵⁹¹ as well as within traditional Yoruba setting.⁵⁹² The practice of hierarchy within a congregational tradition is problematic and, more importantly, is incompatible with both Baptist ideals and biblical teachings on equality, with particular reference to Genesis 1: 21-27 and Ephesians 5: 21 -33. This inconsistency often manifests in the marital arena.

⁵⁹⁰ *Nigerian Baptist Convention Policies and Practices* Ibadan, Baptist Press, 2005, p. 37. See also: Egbeyemi, Olaseni O. S. T. *Ola Akande: Agent of Change* Ibadan, Nigeria: GLJ General Services Ltd, 1996, p. 55.

⁵⁹¹ Wayne Grudem *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, p. 65.

⁵⁹² Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, p.44.

The argument pursued here is built upon the understanding that inherent in Baptist doctrine are steps that will highlight the need for a more mutual relationship, particularly among couples regardless of their gender difference or roles; and acknowledge the biblical viewpoint that men and women are made in the ‘image of God’, hence, the ideals of equality should become the preoccupation of both. Therefore, from the Nigerian Baptist theological perspective, there is no convincing support or justification for hierarchy in marriage. As a matter of fact, NBC’s position can serve as a useful platform to challenge hierarchical underpinnings that have conditioned several marital relationships among Yoruba Christians.

7.3 Male Dominance

The theological traditions that treat women as essentially uninteresting, irrelevant and subservient have always been a hotbed of controversy among scholars.⁵⁹³ Almost all the male respondents opined that, in every human culture, women are, in some ways, subordinate to men.⁵⁹⁴ It is apposite to take a closer examination of the views of some prominent female Yoruba scholars in this regard. Adeoti Oluwatosin Akintan observes that ‘it has often been asserted that the role of women could only be gleaned from the domestic chores they perform at home. As such, it is believed that women have been denied leadership roles in the scheme of things’.⁵⁹⁵ Women’s relevance in traditional Yoruba society was mainly located within the domestic arena:

Women have always been treated with contempt and disdain
in the social, political and economic terrains. Their man

⁵⁹³Francis Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 16.

⁵⁹⁴Respondents 1, 3, 6, 9, 12, 15.

⁵⁹⁵Adeoti Oluwatosin Akintan ‘Women in Yoruba Culture: An Overview’ in *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa* Edited by Dorcas Akintunde and Helen Labeodan Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer, 2002, pp. 1-16.

counterparts have subjected them to discrimination and suppression, right from creation and everywhere in the world.⁵⁹⁶

Similarly, the assertion of J. O. Awolula that the Yoruba culture has relegated women to the background, and treated them as ‘nonentities who could only be seen and not heard’⁵⁹⁷ is consistent with Akintan’s view. Both suggest that women are seen as less privileged and inferior to men. Hence, among the Yoruba, there is a preference for male children over female children.

Traditionally, while male children are viewed as the channel for perpetuating the family name, female children are not as valued because of their limited gender roles, such as house chores, marriage and childbearing. Male dominance explains why the Yoruba prefer male children as custodians of family name and tradition. The birth of a male child is seen as a mark of social fulfilment to the man. To the woman, it signifies satisfaction and security in her husband’s home. However, the birth of a female child often leads to anxiety, shame and even rejection on the part of the woman, who is threatened for failing to give birth to a male child.

Dorcas Akintunde asserts that:

Men usually prove their superiority and dominance by marrying more than one wife as they see in this a confirmation of social status as well as responsibility. Women are generally regarded as inferior to men. They are believed to be different from their male counterparts physically and intellectually. Claiming equality with men is therefore an aberration: and some men infer women should not claim to be what they are not; the moon cannot claim to be equal to the sun.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁶*Ibid*, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁷J. O. Awolula ‘The Traditional Status of Women in African Society’ in *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* Vol. 10, No. 2, 1996, pp. 135- 49.

⁵⁹⁸Dorcas Akintunde No Longer be Silent: A Critique of Women’s Silence in Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria in *African Culture and the Quest for Women’s Rights*, pp. 85 -102, p. 87.

Akintunde argues that the pervasive nature of male dominance in the traditional Yoruba setting has made women to become voiceless and passive observers, instead of active participants in their destiny:

The Yoruba woman shares this fate with women in Hebrew society where the father headed the father's house, the basic unit in Hebrew society. Adult male similarly composed the religious community. These were the people of Israel, the warriors and therefore the people recognized by the law. For women, on the other hand, their primary responsibility was to bear children. Adultery by a married woman was punishable by death. Fidelity was not expected of the men, but brides were supposed to be virgins. Property was passed from father to son. Only when no son is available could daughters inherit.⁵⁹⁹

P. O. Olusanya notes that polygyny is a blatant expression of male dominance in Yoruba society and it is purely 'the exploitation of females'.⁶⁰⁰ African women have found themselves in a number of inhumane and agonizing circumstances. More terrible is the inability of a woman to produce any child at all. This is regarded as total failure in life. The woman loses the prestige formerly accorded to her by marriage; another woman may also be brought in to take over since it is believed that she has failed as woman.⁶⁰¹

The argument that Christianity has been part of the problem of sexism is informed by the various positions of different Christian denominations.⁶⁰² The thesis that inherent

⁵⁹⁹ Dorcas Olu Akintunde, 'No Longer be Silent: A Critique of Women Silence in Christ Apostolic Church' *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights*, p. 88.

⁶⁰⁰ P. O. Olusanya A Note on Some Factors Affecting the Stability of Yoruba Marriage among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria *Journal of Marriage and Family* Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 74 – 90.

⁶⁰¹ Yetunde A. Ola-Aluko and Patrick A. Edewor 'Women, Culture and the African Society' in *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa*

⁶⁰² Within contemporary scholarship, a growing number of voices, particularly feminist theologians, contend that Christianity has either explicitly or otherwise promoted sexism. For instance, Genesis 3: 16 reads: 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.' Commenting on this text, Yetunde Ola-Aluko maintains that sociologists regard the above quotation as a mythological justification for the subordinate position of women in society. And this view surfaces, to some degree, in practically every known society, with significant emphasis in Christian theology. Please see: Bossman, D. 'Presenting the Issue: Biblical Theology's Path Past Patriarchy' *Biblical Theology*

in the Christian message is adequate biblical framework that undercuts male dominance is vital in exploring the theological significance of gender equality among Yoruba couples. There are biblical texts, both in the Old and New Testaments, which stress prominent and leadership roles occupied by women. For instance, in the Old Testament, Deborah (Judges 4: 4 -10) served as a woman judge and prophetess, without whose leadership the children of Israel would have undoubtedly become war casualties. She exhibited such overwhelming influence that Barak, the Israeli army general, said unto her, 'If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go'.⁶⁰³

Similarly, a young woman named Esther came to the fore and rescued the Jews from impending annihilation. According to Judges 3 and 4:

And when Haman saw that Mor'decai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath (....) Then Hammah sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus even the people of Mordecai. Then Esther bade them return to Mordecai this answer, go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat or drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will go ... and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

It is true that Queen Jezebel is portrayed in a negative light in the Bible. The portrayal of Deborah, Esther and the nameless widow of Zarephath (1Kings 17: 8-16), particularly their invaluable roles, overshadow this.

Bulletin Vol. 24, No. 2, 1994; Bonnie Thurston *Women in the New Testament*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, p. 53 and Helen Deidre Crumbley 'Patriarchies, Prophets and Procreation: Sources of Gender Practice in Three African Churches' *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* Vol. 74, 3, 2003, pp. 584-605.

⁶⁰³Judges 4: 8 (NRSV.)

Furthermore, the New Testament, particularly the account of saint Luke,² is replete with various examples where women played leadership and influential roles.⁶⁰⁴ Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary of Bethany, Martha, Lydia and Pricilla, ranked among prominent women that functioned both in the ministry of Jesus Christ and during the pioneering years of the early church (Luke. 7: 36 -50; 10: 38 -42; Acts 16: 11- 40). Besides, the fact that the risen Lord deemed it fit to reveal himself to women before their male counterparts is significant particularly from a doctrinal standpoint. In Matthew 28: 1- 8, the Bible records that:

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earth quake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightening and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keeper did shake and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead and behold he goeth before you in Galilee; there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.⁶⁰⁵

As earlier established, using the synchronic interpretative principles, it is possible that

⁶⁰⁴Naomi Adamu Gisilimbe 'Women's Experience of Contemporary Africa' in *Divine Empowerment of Women in Africa's Complex Realities* Elizabeth Amoah ed., Accra North: Sam Woode Ltd., 2001, pp. 1 -16, p. 5.

⁶⁰⁵ KJV Bible Matthew 28: 1- 8

the divine design was to accord women a status of equal significance in contrast to the subjugated roles that the religious and cultural norms of the time accorded them. That they were also given the mandate to go and proclaim the resurrection message is not to be taken lightly. According to Akintunde, in Jesus' miracle stories, women were highly involved. The story of the woman in Luke 13: 11-13, particularly Jesus' action of freeing and enabling her to stand up straight is significant. It points to the fact that Jesus has enabled women in every part of the world to stand up with a proper sense of dignity, freedom and worth. And the term 'daughter of Abraham' argues Brennan, indicates that she and women generally are members of the people of God and should be treated as such, instead of being valued less than a mere park animal.⁶⁰⁶

Wayne Grudem rightly argues that the Bible has all it takes to bridge gender inequality. However, a theological issue here is whether there is a suggestion of male leadership or headship in the family from the beginning of creation. Certain biblical texts seem to favour the idea of male leadership and dominance. For instance, Genesis 3: 16 reads: 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee'. It is true that the letter Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth (1 Corinthians 14: 34 & 35) contains the following words: 'the women should keep quiet in the church meetings. They are not permitted to speak in public, as the Jewish Law says; they must not be in charge. If they want to find out something they should ask their husband at home'. Paul's stance, however, has been a subject of intense critique to be either a reinforcement of the Genesis' position or perpetuating an existing Jewish cultural practice.

⁶⁰⁶Brennan, I. *Women in the Gospels* (New Blackfriars 52), pp. 291 - 299.

The argument of Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. that God did not choose to call the human race ‘woman,’ but ‘man,’⁶⁰⁷ has some significance for understanding God’s original plan for men and women, especially for people that subscribe to the Genesis’ position.⁶⁰⁸ By the same token, the view of Amy Hall that ‘no hierarchy within a marriage is biblical if the leader is not himself directed by the three central ideas of equality, self-sacrifice and humble service’,⁶⁰⁹ appears inadequate (please see: 1 Corinthians 12: 14 -26 and Ephesians. 5: 25-30). These views are not persuasive because, according to Gisilimbe, ‘it has been wisely said that while all scripture was given for our learning it was also given for the learning of those to whom it was originally addressed’. So, the Apostle Paul’s admonition, along with Gen 5: 2 and a number of similar texts, were addressed to particular audience within a given cultural context or specific situations rather than being prescriptive for all people, at all time and in every situation. Thus, Gen. 5: 2, at best, only shows God’s activity of choosing a name that will be applicable to the entire human race and not simply to legitimize male dominance.

Amba Oduyoye also argues that, despite the overwhelming truism of male dominance among the Yoruba, there are substantial yet unheralded cultural sources that encourage the principles of collegiality. She cites a popular Yoruba proverb that says, ‘if a man

⁶⁰⁷ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. Male Female Equality and Male headship: Gen. 1 -3 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Responses to Evangelical Feminism*, Eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem Wheaton: Ill.: Crossway, 1991, p. 89.

⁶⁰⁸ In Genesis 5: 1-2 we read, ‘When God created man he made him in the likeness of God; male and female He created them, and he blessed them and named them ‘Man’ when they were created’ (cf. Gen. 1: 27) the Hebrew term translated ‘Man’ is ‘Adam’, the same term used for the name of Adam and the same term that is often used for man in distinction from woman. Please see: Gen. 2: 22, 25; 3: 12; Eccl. 7: 8.

⁶⁰⁹ Amy Hall ‘What Does Biblical Hierarchy in Marriage Look Like?’ *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truths* Sept., 2006, pp. 3 – 11.

finds a snake and a woman kills it, no harm is done: the danger has been removed for all.’⁶¹⁰ Also drawing from Yoruba religious tradition, Adeoti Akintan asserts that, ‘in spite of the debilitating circumstances in which women have found themselves, Yoruba religion places a premium on women and their roles in society, especially as a result of their preponderant involvement in different cults of religious worship’.⁶¹¹

7.4 Cultural Conflicts

Whether one adopts E. B. Taylor’s classical definition, Richard H. Niebuhr’s theological definition or the more contemporary definitions of culture, there is still the consensus that culture is a complex concept, which encompasses the totality as well as the essence of an individual. It defines and distinguishes an individual or a group of people from others. Culture and tradition have been identified as contributory factors that shape attitudes, behaviour and worldviews.⁶¹² They are perpetuated through the agencies of family, myths, superstitions, peer groups and community. Both the dynamism and relativity of culture manifest in diverse forms, particularly when foreigners come in contact with or encounter cultures that are different from theirs. Afe Adogame posits that encounters between diaspora Africans in Europe with their host (European) cultures raise varying cultural conflicts as well as significant challenges.⁶¹³

Among the Yoruba, to address or call people, especially one’s seniors, by their first

⁶¹⁰ Amba M. Oduyoye ‘Culture and the Quest for Woman’ Rights’, p. 4

⁶¹¹ Adeoti Oluwatosin Akintan ‘Women in Yoruba Culture: An Overview’ in *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa*. Dorcas Akintunde and Helen Labeodan (Eds) Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer, 2002, pp. 1 – 16, p. 2.

⁶¹² Kehinde Edewor ‘Cultural Attitude to Women’ Education and Economic Empowerment: A Comparative Study of Men and Women in Ijebu Igbo. In *African Culture and the Quest for Women’ Rights*, p. 35.

⁶¹³ Afe Adogame *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity* London: Bloomsbury, pp.

names is seen as disrespectful. However, a similar action within the English society is viewed differently— as an indication of mutuality and friendship. Consequently, there is often the dilemma among the immigrant community whether or not to jettison their cultural norms in favour of those of their host community.

Among the diaspora Yoruba Christian couples in the NWE, a number of issues within the rubric of culture impinge on their relationships. These include gender role responsibilities, power relations between couples, social structures and orientations that accentuate women's rights and the absence of an established socio-cultural hierarchy. Although the experiences of most English Christian couples are not distanced from these variables,⁶¹⁴ the same cannot be said of their Yoruba counterparts. In this wise, B. Makhathini's philosophical argument on the need to divest theologies from debilitating cultural practices is relevant. He notes that:

We know that Christianity is the bread of life for all races. When the Europeans received this bread; they added a plastic bag (their own customs). Later when Europeans missionaries arrived in Africa, they fed us along with the bread, the plastic bag. The plastic bag makes us sick! The plastic bags belong to them ...but the bread belongs to all of us. We can remove the plastic bag and enjoy the bread.⁶¹⁵

So, 'in removing the plastic bag from the bread,' there is the need for two crucial questions: What does the Bible say about culture? And how can one decide what is appropriate or otherwise in our culture?

⁶¹⁴ As already identified in chapter five, while the pattern of interpersonal relationships within Yoruba setting is built around age, social status, gender and other considerations, the English society veers differently; there are more empowering structures for women. Consequently, relationships between couples tend towards collegiality and less based on male dominance, gender role dichotomy or hierarchy.

⁶¹⁵ E. Makhathini in Bruce Britten *We Don't Want your White Religion* Roodepoort: Word of Life Publishers, 1979, p. 32.

Ernest Ezeogu draws from the dialectic and dialogic models of analysis to foster an understanding of the complex and intricate link between the biblical message and culture.⁶¹⁶ The dialectic model assumes that the Bible⁶¹⁷ and culture are opposed to each other, 'in constant conflict with each other and thus ultimately irreconcilable.'⁶¹⁸ Such polarity is usually mirrored through the language of contrasting terms, such as: the gospel is 'divine,' while culture is 'human'; the gospel is 'eternal,' while culture is 'time-bound;' and the gospel is from 'above,' while culture is from 'below'. The advocates of this view argue that, to bridge the dichotomy between the gospel and culture, the latter has to yield to the demands of the former. Put differently, since every culture is human, it has to submit to the revelation of the Bible.

Conversely, the dialogic model sees the gospel and culture 'as two compatible entities that could and should be reconciled.'⁶¹⁹ In other words, the view welcomes the possibility of harmonious dialogue between the gospel and culture in such a way that it results in mutual enrichment and relevance. The argument here supports the works of Richard H. Niebuhr, especially his book *Christ and Culture*, which proposed the idea of 'Christ transforming culture'.⁶²⁰ He contends that in every human culture, there are wholesome and unwholesome aspects that need the transforming presence of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all cultures. He identifies three categories within which Christian's

⁶¹⁶ Ernest M. Ezeogu 'Bible and Culture in African Theology' Part 1 *Time Magazine Europe Survey of African Religion Web Resources*, March 1, 2000. Julius Lipner 'Being One Let Me Be Many': Acts of the Relationship Between the Gospel and Culture' *International Review of Mission* LXXIV/294: (1985), pp. 158 -168.

⁶¹⁷ In this particular context, words such as the 'Bible', 'gospel' and 'the Christian message' are used interchangeably to convey similar meaning. They imply the revealed truth of Jesus Christ as enshrined in the Bible, which assumes the authority of God's word and thereby distinguishes Christians from others as a result of their faith.

⁶¹⁸ Ernest Ezeogu, p. 160.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 161.

⁶²⁰ Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996, p. 16.

attitudes and responses to culture can be located. They include 'Christ against culture,' 'Christ above culture' and 'Christ of culture.'⁶²¹ The Christ of culture highlights the divine principles that acknowledge and continuously seek to facilitate the empowerment of the human person. Hence, any form of practice, norm or tradition that reduces the biblical concept of the 'image of God' in human beings is seen as a cultural aberration. Consequently, 'Christ against culture' does not necessarily imply antagonism of culture or reflective of the essence of Ezeogu's dialectic model; rather, it implies a conscious call to engage the inimical aspects of every culture in the light of the gospel message. Niebuhr's framework and Ezeogu's dialogical model are, therefore, relevant in analysing the congenial and acceptability of every culture in relation to the overall Christian/gospel message.

It is necessary to highlight the social and cultural issues in England that relate to marital stability among Yoruba couples. Although some of these issues have already been identified, a cursory mention is still relevant in order to employ Niebuhr's 'Christ of culture' paradigm for analytical purposes. The underlying basis of cultural difference and conflict that Yoruba couples experience revolves around gender roles, power relations between husband and wife, social structures and orientations that accentuate women's rights and the absence of an established socio-cultural hierarchy.

The Christ and culture debate may reinforce the tendency of some, particularly Christians, to forget that theology and its understanding is a cultural product. Theological activities and presuppositions 'are not culture and value free'.⁶²² Theologians or Christian communities are usually shaped and formed by their cultural

⁶²¹ *Ibid*, p.17.

⁶²² Bediako, Kwame *The Christian Gospel in African History* Accra: Ragnum Africa, 2013, p. 21.

worldviews. 'Theology is a natural part of religious praxis; that is theology does not enter from the outside but is part of what we do in expressing our faith.'⁶²³ John Mbiti argues that:

Cultural identities are temporal, serving to yield us as Christians to the fullness of our identity with Christ. Paradoxically, cultures snatch us away from Christ, it denies we are His; yet when it is best understood, at its meeting with Christianity, culture drives us to Christ and surrenders us to Him, affirming us to be permanently, totally and unconditionally His.⁶²⁴

The Christ of culture beckons on people of all races, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds or orientations 'to do unto others as you wish them to do unto you' by drawing from biblical teachings as embodied in the historical Jesus.' Diaspora Yoruba Christian couples will be able to actively associate with and draw meaning from either their culture or the host culture using the Christ of culture principles.

7.5 Conclusion

The chapter examined the debate that theology cannot be value- and culture-neutral. Diaspora Yoruba Christian couples, in common with other immigrant communities in England, struggle with various cultural and social changes. The analysis revealed that the Nigerian Baptist Convention polity, theological stance and some relevant biblical texts offer rays of hope for couples experiencing marital instability.

In addition, the chapter argued that, in the quest for a better understanding of Yoruba patriarchal culture, gender role responsibilities, equality in marriage and socio-cultural

⁶²³Clement Sedmak *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* Maryknoll: Orbit Books, 1971, p. 14

⁶²⁴John Mbiti African Indigenous Culture in Relation to Evangelism and Church Development. In R. Pierce Beaver (ed), *The Gospel and Frontier People* (A Report of a Consultation, Dec. 1972, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973, p. 34.

challenges or difference, Yoruba Christian couples have a significantly profound reservoir in the Bible. Subsequently, applying the truth of God's word to marital relationships to reflect God's plan for all his children irrespective of gender largely rests on the sincerity and openness of Yoruba men. This desired transformation will certainly reduce, if not totally eradicate, all forms of sexist or male dominance that have prevented the realization of a fulfilling conjugal union among Yoruba Christian couples either in the North West of England or other cultural settings.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

TOWARDS A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO MARITAL INSTABILITY

8.1 Introduction

The analysis of the data identified a number of themes, which were subjected to a theological analysis. The findings beg the question as to how well equipped the diaspora churches are to respond pastorally to the living experiences of Yoruba married couples in the NWE and UK, in general. More importantly, the effectiveness of NBC resources in a UK setting raises further concerns, which demand in-depth analysis. Consequently, as the researcher is himself a pastor of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, it is appropriate to begin with a consideration of the position of that church tradition on marriage, which impacts its pastoral responses. It is however vital to point out that this exercise is not a treatise on biblical teaching on marriage but an attempt to examine key texts that are given prominence by the Nigerian Baptist Convention in its discussion on marriage.

The significance of pastoral response in this regard cannot be overstated in view of the strong affinity and authority of both the Bible and the religious allegiance of Yoruba Christian couples in the NWE to the NBC. The chapter argues that when appropriate initiatives and resources are channelled through the frame of pastoral counselling and facilitated by the pastor as he/she draws upon the image of 'divine agent' (*Olusoagutan*) that is accorded to pastors within Yoruba tradition, there is always a strong likelihood to elicit positive marital outcomes. An exegesis of the key texts that are prominent in the NBC's stance on marriage is done using the synchronic

instead of the diachronic hermeneutic approach and its limitations are analysed, before a pastoral proposal built upon a counselling approach is offered.

8.2 The Nigerian Baptist Convention's Position on Marriage and Divorce

The theological position of the Nigerian Baptist Convention advocates a non-compromising and conservative view in relation to the permanence of marriage. Based on the conviction that marriage, once properly contracted, consecrated and celebrated (through adherence to family and church prescriptions) is presumed to be permanent by the church. Consequently, any form of deviation, either through divorce and remarriage or polygamy, is vehemently opposed and unacceptable.

The NBC's theological positions are informed by the synchronic hermeneutical approach.⁶²⁵ The Convention family largely sings from the same page in terms of the acceptance of marriage as permanent as well as the refutation of polygamy. However, there is little doubt that the secularizing influences of modernity, globalisation, independence and migration among other eroding social changes challenge the durability of such doctrinal harmony. There are instances where couples of NBC extraction strongly contemplate and sometimes become involved in divorce or remarriage. For example, two respondents were seriously contemplating divorce owing to irreconcilable difference.⁶²⁶ David W. Jones notes that divorce and remarriage have become pressing social concerns of today⁶²⁷ particularly among Christians.

⁶²⁵ Ulrich Luz *'Hermeneia A Critical and Historical Commentary of the Bible'* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007

⁶²⁶ Respondent 1 had separated from his wife in the last two years. He stated categorically that there was no going back. Respondent 7 also signaled that he was not far from divorce, as he had also left the matrimonial home for six months.

⁶²⁷ David W. Jones 'The Betrothal View of Divorce and Remarriage' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165, No. 657 January 2008, 68.

A major assumption in Christian theology that God has spoken, is speaking and will continue to speak in every generation⁶²⁸ should galvanize interest, within the NBC, to continuously decipher fresh insights from the unchanging divine message in a changing world. Such need becomes more crucial against the backdrop that the NBC does not provide resources for marriage support for its members in diaspora. Whilst individual pastors produce their own resources, there is a significant gap in the provision of high-quality materials that will assist pastors and congregations in supporting members going through marital difficulties. The fact that the NBC has not taken the challenge to provide adequate support for either ministers or couples along with the cultural challenges (the presupposition that Yoruba traditions and expectations can be directly and uncritically mapped onto biblical text) warrants a re-examination of the prominent texts employed by the NBC.

8.3 Exegesis of Matthew 5: 32 & 19: 9 in Relation to Marriage and Divorce

The purpose of this section is not a holistic analysis of the various biblical texts that relate to marriage and other issues surrounding it, but to examine biblical texts that are given prominence by the NBC in its discussion of marriage. The NBC and its literature serve as the starting point of reference. However, I take the discussion further by relating it to the teaching of Jesus Christ on the indissolubility and permanence of conjugal union. The key texts employed by the NBC in its treatment of issues concerning marriage and divorce are the accounts in Matthew 5: 32 and 19: 9, respectively. To the NBC, the weight of authority of these texts is partly due to their explicit link to the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus as well as the overwhelming

⁶²⁸ Yusuf Amen Obaje *Christian Theology in Africa* Ibadan: Baptist Press, 1992, p. 49.

consensus enjoyed by the Matthew account within biblical scholarship.⁶²⁹ These texts are used as a template for analysis and interpretation. In the New International Version of the Bible, Matthew 5: 31- 32 reads: 'It has been said, 'anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce'. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery'.

The Authorized Standard Version (ASV) reads: 'But I say unto you, that everyone that *putteth away* his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is *put away* committeth adultery.

The Bible in Basic English states thus: 'But I say to you that everyone who *put away* his wife for any other cause but the loss of her virtue makes her false to her husband; and whoever takes her as his wife after she is put away is no true husband to her'.

The New King James Version (NKJV) reads: 'But I say to you that whoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication causes her to commit adultery. And whoever shall marry her who is put away commits adultery'.

Worldwide English Version (WEV) says: 'But I tell you; no man may *send away* his wife unless she has committed adultery. If he does *send her away*, he is making her commit adultery. And if a man marries a woman who ha been *sent away* from her husband, he commits adultery.

These versions are of major concern for the exegetes; they present an interesting exegetical discussion concerning the acceptability or permissibility of divorce.

However, as Robert Waters argues:

⁶²⁹ *Policies and Practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention* Ibadan, p. 5 and Robert E. Baines, *What Baptist Believe*, New York: REB Ministries Publishing Company, 2012, p.60.

The strongest evidence of a proper translation of a word is the meaning rendered by respected translators. The ASV is the most respected for accuracy and reliability. Also, a few of the other versions ... are highly respected and quoted from. It is primarily the new versions, which are known for unfaithfulness to the original language that in some instance renders *apoluo* [put away] as divorce.

The text provokes interest in the quest to rightly understand the original context; the background and the meaning of the word as it was used by Jesus, and subsequently translated divorce in the NIV and other English versions. Two distinct positions, the traditional view and dissenting view can be identified in this argument. Before articulating each position, it is vital to acknowledge the points of contention. Is divorce ever permitted in the Bible? Are all cases of divorce a direct disobedience to God? To what extent can one stretch ‘what God has joined together let no man separate?’ As Philip Leineweber points out, ‘quite often, a Christian will go to the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Gospels to come to terms with their concern and they find apparent contradiction and uncertainty’.⁶³⁰ Part of the problem that the text (Mt. 5: 32) presents is that it’s meaning is still vague and ill defined, producing many interpretations.

The traditional view that God intended permanency of marriage but provides for divorce for the reason of fornication requires further explanation of what fornication means. David Janzen subscribes to this view by defining ‘*porneia*’ as ‘intercourse with someone other than her husband on the part of the woman during betrothal or marriage.’⁶³¹ For Charles Spurgeon, the word ‘*porneia*’ was synonymous with ‘infidelity to the marriage vow’, mainly adultery. He further notes that ‘one who

⁶³⁰ Philip R. Leineweber ‘The Greek Word *Porneia* in the Matthean Exception Clauses’ A Senior Honours Thesis Liberty University, Fall 2008, p. 5.

⁶³¹ David Janzen ‘The Meaning of *Porneia* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 an Approach from the Study of Ancient Near East Culture’ *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, December 2000, p. 67.

commits adultery does by that act and deed in effect sunder the marriage bond, and it ought then to be formally recognized by the state as being sundered'.⁶³² D. C. Jones avers that unfaithfulness or immorality is the only ground for biblical divorce.⁶³³ This view is popular among most contemporary evangelical scholars and churches, including the NBC, with a shared interpretation that the Greek word *porneia* is a reference to adultery. Others hold a more radical position owing to a different rendition of *porneia*: this is the dissenting view.

The alternative view to the question of divorce and remarriage differs from the traditional view on the grounds of the Greek word *Apoluo* translated in many versions as divorce instead of 'put away', 'to let go', 'to let loose', and 'to send away'.⁶³⁴ Roberts Waters argues that it is quite clear that the meaning of the text within the context of Matthew 5: 3 is that marrying a woman who has been separated from her husband but has not received the bill of divorce results in adultery.⁶³⁵ This means that the 'exception clause' found in Matthew 5: 32 and 19: 9 does not forbid the divorced to marry, but only the 'put away' – those who are merely separated, and thus, still married'.⁶³⁶ According to *Strong Exhaustive Bible Dictionary*, the correct Greek word for divorce is *apostasion* and is so properly translated 647 times in the Bible. The confusion here is that a number of translations, such as NKJV, have translated *apoluo* as divorce in Mt. 5:32, assuming that 'divorce' and 'put away' mean the same thing. *Truth Smith Bible Dictionary* defines divorce as 'a legal dissolution of the marriage

⁶³² Charles Haddon Spurgeon *The King Has Come*. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1987, p. 59.

⁶³³ David Clyde Jones 'The Westminster Confession on Divorce and Marriage' *Presbyterion* Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 1990, pp. 17 & 76.

⁶³⁴ Bagster *Analytical Lexicon*

⁶³⁵ Bruce Vawter 'Divorce and the New Testament' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Vol. 39, no. 4 (October 1977), p. 532.

⁶³⁶ Robert Waters, 'Authorities of the English Words Put Away', p. 60.

relation;’ while *Geneva Bible*, translated from the Textus Receptus in 1599 (years before the KJV), views the term put away thus: ‘that is, was not lawfully divorced’.⁶³⁷

The key contention of the alternative or dissenting view is the idea that Jesus was talking about men merely putting away their wives and not divorcing them lawfully. Thus by implication, divorce or remarriage becomes a viable option; permissible, in so far as a lawful divorce has been reached and established. Jamison Fausset Brown notes that:

[Isaiah 50:1] Horsy best explains (as the antithesis between “I” and “yourselves” shows though Lowth translate “ye are sold”) I have never given your mother a regular bill of divorcement; I have merely ‘put her away’ for a time, and can, therefore, by right as her husband still take her back on her submission; I have not made you, the children, over to any creditor to satisfy a debt; I therefore still have the right of a father over you, and can take you back on repentance, though as rebellious children you have sold yourselves to sin and its penalty.

It is not the preoccupation of this discussion to justify any of these views but to examine the biblical underpinnings upon which the NBC’s position is based. The alternative or dissenting views significantly remain unwelcome. In spite of the limitations inherent in the NBC interpretative framework, with regard to its simplistic, inadequate biblical scholarship and the tendency to apply biblical texts superficially, the problem of mapping traditional or cultural practices into doctrinal categories is not uncommon. Several African theologians, such as Kwame Bediako,⁶³⁸ Yusufu Obaje,⁶³⁹ and Osadolor Imasogie,⁶⁴⁰ have reiterated that the theologian cannot be separated from his context or cultural milieu in his/her theological endeavours. Hence,

⁶³⁷ Waters, ‘Authorities on the Meaning of Divorce’ p.61

⁶³⁸ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995, p.8.

⁶³⁹ Obaje, Yusuf Amen *Christian Theology in Africa* p. 49.

⁶⁴⁰ Osadolor, Imasogie *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* Ibadan, p.4.

scholars have highlighted the need for constant re-examination and re-interpretation of our theological positions in the light of contemporary occurrences.⁶⁴¹ James Hurley asserts that:

The Christian church has historically taken the position that the bible is the inspired revelation from God and is the rule for faith and practice. This commitment has consequences. Human culture changes, attitudes and life context are constantly being modified. Each generation must re-evaluate traditional applications of scripture's teaching to see if they are inadequate in the new social structures. The struggle of each generation is to remain faithful to that which the scripture teaches without treating interpretations and applications, which the church has made as though they were biblical teaching.⁶⁴²

From the foregoing, the NBC's effort in this direction can be described as not comprehensive. Otherwise, on what bases does its stance on the permanency of marriage rest?

8.4 The Relevance of Pastoral Care and Counselling

'If it had not been for the pastor I would have left my husband';⁶⁴³ 'after all the quarrelling and fighting, I am still in this marriage because of the encouragement and advice of my pastor';⁶⁴⁴ and 'my pastor is God sent to our marriage'.⁶⁴⁵ These and other similar responses from both male and female respondents align with Gerard Leavey's proposition that, despite the advancement of secularizing influences in contemporary societies, religion and faith-based organisations play a significant role

⁶⁴¹ Laura Thompson *The Secret of Culture*, New York: Random House, 1969, p. 4

⁶⁴² Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*, Michigan: Biblical Perspective, 2000, p. 9.

⁶⁴³ Respondent 6.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁵ Respondent 7.

in the lives of many individuals and communities.⁶⁴⁶ Pastoral care and counselling, in particular, is a vital and integral aspect of the church's ministry to support, empower and facilitate growth among the population, especially church members. Within the wider academic discipline, pastoral care and counselling fall under the remit of pastoral theology or sometimes referred to as practical theology.⁶⁴⁷ Pastoral theology is 'the theological study of the church's action in its own life and towards society, in response to the activities of God'.⁶⁴⁸ In other words, pastoral theology is concerned with the systematic application in practice of theories derived from academic study of theological ideas.

Pastoral care and pastoral counselling are essential components of pastoral theology, which draws significantly from the sustaining, guiding, supporting, teaching, healing, conducting liturgy, shepherding and preaching traditions of the church. Having discussed the influences of Sigmund Freud and Carl Rogers to practical theology with particular reference to pastoral counselling, Gordon Lynch asserts that 'the task of counselling is to give the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more satisfyingly and resourcefully'.⁶⁴⁹

Pastoral care is broader (particularly from the church's perspective) encompassing the totality of ministerial responsibilities of the clergy. William Clebsch and Charles Jeakle, pioneer twentieth-century pastoral care theorists, assert that pastoral care consists of helping acts, carried out by representative(s) of religious institutions,

⁶⁴⁶ Gerard Leavey U. K. 'Clergy and People in Mental Distress: Community and Patterns of Pastoral Care' *Transcultural Psychiatry* March 2008, Vol. 45, No. 1, 79-104.

⁶⁴⁷ James Wood and Stephen Pattison 'An Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology.' In *Blackwell Readers in Pastoral and Practical Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000, pp. 1-19.

⁶⁴⁸ Alistair Campbell (ed.) *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care*. London: SPCK, 1987, p. 188.

⁶⁴⁹ Gordon Lynch 'The Relationship between Pastoral Counselling and Pastoral Theology' in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, p. 224.

primarily for healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling troubled persons, whose troubles arise owing to existential concerns and meanings.⁶⁵⁰ Howard Clinebell,⁶⁵¹ however, contends that the ‘nurturing’ dimension is the missing link in Clebsch and Jeakles’ view.

Mark Sunderland offers this distinction between pastoral care and counselling:

Pastoral care seeks to restore the individual to wholeness within a positive relationship to the church, itself struggling to remain open to the guidance of the higher values of the kingdom as taught by Jesus in the Gospels. Pastoral counselling attempts to address the hurt individual men and women experience in the struggle between social expediency and personal liberation. Pastoral counselling takes up where pastoral care stops by focusing on the individual’s internal subjective deformation. While more limited in scope than pastoral care, it offers a more finely turned instrument capable of encountering the deeper levels of vicissitude resulting from the individual’s historical encounter with the external world.⁶⁵²

Yet pastoral counselling and pastoral care have very close affinity: both serve similar purposes, clients and contextual settings. The synergic relationship and difference between these terms are vividly captured by Joseph Ewiwilem,⁶⁵³ John Foskell and Michael Jacobs: ‘that pastoral care transcends the desire to reclaim its Christian heritage’, ‘pastoral counselling is part of a more general pastoral care’, thus, ‘pastoral counselling is not easily separated from pastoral care’.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵⁰ William Clebsch and Charles Jeakle. *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*. New York: Harper Torch Books, 1975, pp. 17-29.

⁶⁵¹ Howard Clinebell *Growth Counselling: Hope-Centred Methods of Actualizing Human Wholeness* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁵² Mark Sunderland ‘Developing a Transpersonal Approach to Pastoral Counselling’ *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* Vol. 49, no. 4, 2001, pp. 381-390.

⁶⁵³ The significance of Joseph Ewiwilem is that he explored pastoral counselling in a Nigerian context. See: Joe Ewiwilem ‘Pastoral Counselling: A Tool for Spiritual Maturity among NBC members’ PhD. Thesis, 2011, p. 46.

⁶⁵⁴ John Foskett and Michael Jacobs ‘Pastoral Counselling’ in *Handbook of Counselling in Britain* Windy Dryden, David Charles-Edwards & Ray Woolfe (eds.), London: Tavistock/Routledge Publishers, 1989, p. 254.

8.4.1 Premarital Counselling

The present rate of divorce and remarriage points to the difficulties that many couples have in achieving a happy and lasting marriage. William J. Sneck observes that one possible solution in addressing this problem is to improve couples' preparation for marriage through premarital counselling.⁶⁵⁵ Robert F. Stehmann asserts that 'premarital counselling generally refers to a process designed to enhance and enrich premarital relationship leading to more satisfactory and stable marriages with the intended consequence being to prevent divorce'.⁶⁵⁶ Fawcett et al. observe that premarital education programmes have a positive effect on programme participants.⁶⁵⁷

The premarital counsellor must answer two crucial questions while preparing engaged people for marriage: What areas should be addressed when preparing couples for marriage? How can marriage preparation be made attractive so that engaged couples will like to take advantage of it? William J. Sneck writes that 'before people plunge themselves into the deepest mutual experience of human intimacy possible, with the societal support and sanction that accompany marriage', premarital counselling is important.⁶⁵⁸ Dennis A. Bagarizzi et al. argue that preparing couples to build successful marriages reduces the incidences of divorce, and prevents unsuccessful

⁶⁵⁵ William J. Sneck 'Premarital Divorce' *America* November 1997, pp. 6-10, p. 6.

⁶⁵⁶ Robert F. Stehmann 'Premarital Counselling: A Focus on Family Therapy' *Journal of Family Therapy* Vol. 22, Issue 1, Dec. 2002, pp. 3.

⁶⁵⁷ Elizabeth B. Fawcett, Alan J. Hawkins, Victoria L. Blanchard and Jason S. Carrol 'Do Premarital Education Programs Really Works? A Meta Analytic Study' *Family Relations* Vol. 59, July 2010, pp. 232 - 239.

⁶⁵⁸ William J. Sneck, p. 9.

marriages from occurring; hence, the relevance of an in-depth and engaged premarital counselling.⁶⁵⁹

From a Christian perspective, premarital counselling involves instruction, information, guidance and discussions with prospective couples on the tenets and requirements of ideal Christian marriage. According to Foskett, what distinguishes pastoral counselling from other forms of counselling and psychotherapy is the role and accountability of the counsellor (who, most often, is a clergyman) and his or her understanding and expression of the pastoral relationship. Pastoral counsellors are representatives of the central images of life and its meaning affirmed by their religious communities. Thus, pastoral counselling offers relationship to that understanding of life and faith.⁶⁶⁰

Although a number of different approaches to premarital counselling have been developed to better prepare couples for marriage, research suggests that few couples ever engaged such resources prior to the consummation of their nuptial union.⁶⁶¹ Consistent with Lee William's view, the outcomes of the participant observation (which focused on Yoruba marriage ceremony) as well as the interviews suggested that only few engaged couples participated in any form of premarital counselling. Even the few that were involved were very critical of the counselling

⁶⁵⁹ Dennis A. Bagarozzi et al., 'Premarital Counselling: Appraisal and Status' *The American Journal of Family Therapy* Vol. 9, Issue 3, 1981, pp. 204-17.

⁶⁶⁰ John Foskett 'Pastoral Counselling in Britain: An Introduction' *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* Vol. 29, No. 4, 2001, pp. 373 - 386.

⁶⁶¹ Lee Williams 'Premarital Counselling' *Journal of Couples & Relationship Therapy: Innovations in Clinical and Educational Interventions* Vol. 6, Issue 1- 2, 2007, pp. 207-217; 'Preferences of Individuals in Committed Relationships about Premarital Counselling' *The American Journal of Family Therapy* Vol. 41, Issue 4, 2013, pp. 330-340.

content as being irrelevant to the practical issues of marriage. They were prepared for marriage in a Nigerian context but were unprepared for diaspora encounters. According to Respondent 14, ‘the essence of premarital counselling in our case was for the church to tell us what they wanted in terms of donation to the church and minister’.

Therefore, to foster better content materials capable of addressing the crucial issues confronting Yoruba Christian couples; a variety of approaches will be described here, with greater attention on those used in church settings, where the majority of premarital counselling is performed.⁶⁶² A brief summary of the premarital counselling research will also be presented, including what research claims are important ingredients to designing effective premarital counselling approaches. These include the ten relationship areas of marriage expectations, as espoused by Stanley, Markman et al.: personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, finance management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, role relationship and spiritual beliefs.⁶⁶³ According to Benjamin Silliman and Walter R. Schumn, ‘preparation for marriage has been a traditional component of family socialization, supported by religious and social guidance on mate selection and

⁶⁶² There are three main categories of resource persons that directly offer premarital counselling: the clergy, the psychotherapist/counsellor and mental health workers. These providers may also involve laypersons, church elders or the elderly within traditional settings; all are usually motivated by a common concern to empower the engaged couples towards their forthcoming marriage. Given the diversities of resource persons, it is understandable while various contexts other than the church are often employed. However, the focus here is the type of premarital counselling that is offered in the church setting. A further distinction is presented by H. Anderson ‘Marriage Preparation: A Protestant Perspective’ In H. Anderson; D. B. Browning and M. S. Van Leeuwen (eds.) *The Family Handbook* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998, pp. 114-117; Markman, H. J., Renick, M. J., Floyd F., Stanley S. and Clements M. ‘Preventing Marital Distress through Communication and Conflict Management Training: a 4- and 5-year follow-up’ *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* Vol. 61, pp. 70 – 77.

⁶⁶³ Stanley, S. M., Markman H. J., St. Peter, M. and Leber, D. B. ‘Strengthening Marriages and Preventing Divorce: New Directions in Prevention Research’ *Family Relations* Vol. 44, pp. 391-401.

marital role performance.⁶⁶⁴ There are many approaches to premarital counselling in contemporary scholarship in practical or pastoral theology. A brief identification is offered here for four of the most widely used; a more detailed discussion is presented in the section on marriage-enrichment programmes.

A. Prevention and Enhancement Relationship Programme (PREP)

B. Integrative Premarital Counselling Programme (IPCP)

C. Relationship Enhancement (RE)

D. Premarital Education Sequence (PETS)

According to Stanley et al., the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programme (PREP) is a cognitive behavioural skill training programme designed to strengthen interactive skills among engaged couples.⁶⁶⁵ Drawing from the mainstream cognitive behavioural tradition, PREP is based on the assumption that interpersonal relationship skills can be influenced through the direct involvement or intervention of a therapist. Although this premarital counselling and preparation approach acknowledges that all behaviour may not necessarily respond to rational thought, it seeks to induce positive behaviour and outcomes between couples by employing cognitive methods for enhancing social exchange.⁶⁶⁶ While offering further descriptions about preventive and relationship-enhancement programme, Robert F. Stahmann states that:

⁶⁶⁴ Benjamin Silliman and Walter R. Schumm 'Marriage Preparation Programmes: A literature Review' *The Family Journal, Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families* Vol. 8, No. 2, April 2000, pp. 133 – 142.

⁶⁶⁵ Stanley, et al., p. 390.

⁶⁶⁶ Dickson, F. C. and Markman, J. C. 'The Benefit of Communication Research: Intervention Programmes for Couples and Families' in P. G. Boss, W. J. Doherty, R. LaRoss, W. R Schumm and S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Source Book for Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach*. New York: Plenum, pp. 586-89, 1983, p.

In the PREP approach engaged couples are taught skills in handling conflicts (male and female difference in handling conflicts, the speaker-listener technique and problem-solving), dealing with core issues (expectations, forgiveness, commitment and the restoration of intimacy) and enhancement (friendship, fun, sex life and core belief system).

In essence, PREP interventions assume that it is the negative aspects of a couples' behaviour that are the important predictor of crisis; thus, couples are taught skills for effective communication alongside what ineffective communication is. In terms of its outcomes and evaluation, Markman et al. and Stanley et al. note that the participants in PREP demonstrated gains in interactive skills: positive intervention, including mutual support, positive affection towards their partners, and reduced conflict escalation.⁶⁶⁷

Another premarital counselling approach that commends itself to pastors in the task of marriage preparation is the Integrative Premarital Counselling Programme (IPCP). This counselling method assumes that couples can enhance their relationships and thereby increase the likelihood of marital success and satisfaction.⁶⁶⁸ The integrative nature is underscored by the various concepts, skills and information utilized from a range of family systems, marital interactions and skill-building programmes. The ICPC can be used with individual couples or in groups to promote effective communication, goal setting and doing a dynamic relationship history. Stapmann and Hiebert opine that 'where possible the couple's parents could be invited to a counselling session for the recognition of the 'new' married couples and to pass on wisdom from one generation to the other'.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁷ Markman et al., p and Stanley et al., p. 391.

⁶⁶⁸ Stahmann and Hiebert *Premarital and marital Counselling: A Professional's Handbook*, p. 83.

⁶⁶⁹ Robert F. Stahmann 'Premarital Counselling: a Focus for Family Therapy', *Journal of Family Therapy*, p. 110.

Although there is minimal research that validates the effectiveness of the integrative premarital counselling approach, it appears closer to the method common to the NBC pastors, who are the main dispensers of pastoral counselling among the Yoruba Christians. With no standardized resource or systematized approach for premarital counselling, NBC ministers simply draw from various texts in the Bible that best suit the subject of discussion to counsel would-be couples. The danger with such eclectic approach is the tendency by the pastoral counsellor to pay little or no attention to areas where she/he lacks the relevant expertise or knowledge and this reduces the overall usefulness of premarital preparation. One could question the practice where most of the clergy or designated marriage counsellors, particularly within the NBC, see and use premarital counselling session as a screening exercise. Yes, it is vital to ask relevant questions, but the aim of the programme goes beyond questions: it seeks to enrich and facilitate engaged couples' self-awareness, effective communication, conflict resolution and financial management, among others, leading to a more stable marriage.

A review of the literature dealing with premarital counselling and programmes showed that most studies reported significant positive outcomes, only few indicated minimal or no effect of marriage preparation programmes. However, no study has demonstrated negative effect for individuals or couples who participated in any marriage preparation efforts.⁶⁷⁰ A major pastoral response to effecting marital stability is to draw from programmes such as PREP and RE in facilitating education of couples. It is right to argue that premarital counselling offers educational, remedial

⁶⁷⁰Silliman and Schumnn, p. 136.

and preventive functions to engaged couples to empower their relationship and thereby forestall the likelihood of marriage breakdown in the future.⁶⁷¹

8.4.2 Post-Marital Counselling

The level of engaged Yoruba couples that participate in premarital counselling is low, but the statistics of married couples that access post-marital counselling are embarrassingly minimal.⁶⁷² Post-marital counselling is a time-bound marriage-enhancement programme, which is most relevant immediately after the wedding/marriage, usually within the first year of marriage. Commenting on the need for a form of mandatory post-marriage counselling for couples, Stahmann says ‘it is recommended that a post-wedding follow-up session be scheduled for about six months after the wedding.’⁶⁷³ Buckner and Salts proposed PAP, a six premarital, one post-marital 14-hour interview regimen aimed at assisting couples and developing therapists.⁶⁷⁴ Although research suggested that those who benefit most from premarital, post-marital or marriage counselling must voluntarily seek it rather than be forced into it,⁶⁷⁵ the argument pursued here is that couples should be aware of the availability of the programme.

⁶⁷¹ Stehmann R. F. and Hiebert W. J. *Premarital and Premarital Counselling: The Professional's Handbook* San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass, 1997, p.

⁶⁷² The idea of post-marital counselling for couples is almost non-existent for three reasons: unlike premarital counselling, there is no mandatory requirement for married couples to undergo counselling. Marriage counselors (clergy) are often predisposed to focus on either premarital counselling or offering marriage-enrichment programme and the view that there need to be a problem (marital) before engaging in counselling instead of accessing counselling as a means for growth. Together, these factors tend to undermine the popularity as well as the need for post-marital counselling. In addition, among the sampled population for this research, only a couple indicated having engaged in post-marital counselling. Such lack of attention offers opportunities for the clergy/pastoral counsellor and research.

⁶⁷³ Stahmann, ‘Premarital Counselling: A Focus for Family Therapy’ p. 110.

⁶⁷⁴ See: L. P. Buckner and Salts, C. J. ‘Premarital Assessment Program *Family Relations* Vol. 34, 1985, pp. 513 - 520.

⁶⁷⁵ Stahmann and Hiebert, Stanley et al., p. 392 and the Center for Marriage and Family, 1995.

Wide-ranging marriage stability factors and skill development, such as effective communication, problem solving, relations to parents, finances, family roles and decision-making, are integral components that determine the content of post-marital counselling. This type of marriage intervention programme should be seen as a developmental process aimed at assisting young couples or newly married couples in enhancing their relationship. Insights and information gleaned by couples during the sessions should shape decisions that affect their relationships. In view of the sensitive and terminal nature of post-marital counselling, pastoral counsellors should target individual couple instead of the group format, as it enables them to focus attention and energy. However, recognizing the fact that a number of ‘newly wedded couples’ may be unable to access post-marital counselling for several reasons, the marriage-enrichment programmes will undoubtedly be handy and are strongly recommended.

8.4.3 Marriage-enrichment Programmes

The positive outcomes of competence-building programmes and the negative implications of marital distress necessitate the need for an on-going couple education among diaspora Yoruba Christians. As a result, the framework for the discussion of marriage-enrichment programmes, particularly from the clergy and local church perspectives draws significantly from the ideas of Relate, the largest providers of couple counselling in the UK.⁶⁷⁶ Relate is reputed for its long and pragmatic marriage preparation insights. The principal way it delivers this service is through educationally oriented courses undertaken in co-operation with local churches.

These courses aim at improving communication, handling conflicts and creating an understanding within the different stages of marriage relationship and or relationships

⁶⁷⁶ Robert F. Stehmann, p. 137.

in general. A number of similar studies on marriage enrichment equally highlight the pivotal role of effective communication as an indicator of a healthy marriage and how the absence of it often becomes a precursor of marital instability.⁶⁷⁷ Marriage enrichment is heavily dependent on improved couple communication.⁶⁷⁸

Unlike premarital counselling and post-marital counselling, marriage enrichment is needed throughout the duration of marriage and across the various spectrums of couples. Marriage enrichment is any programme that is designed to engender better living between couples by acquiring skills of communication and human behaviour. These two skills are best learned through experimental methods in groups of couples.⁶⁷⁹ Its key purposes are couple education, remedial functions and preventive roles. Strengthening marriages, reducing the prevalence of marital instability and, in the long run, lowering divorce rate are the overarching goals of marriage enrichment.⁶⁸⁰

Marriage-enhancement programmes are varied, drawing on a number of different approaches to engineer greater partner/couple awareness, clarified expectations and better grasp of relationship dynamics. The following approaches are the major marriage-enhancement programmes: marriage education, marriage seminar/workshop, couples retreat, and Couple's Communication Programme (CCP).

⁶⁷⁷ Stanley et al., 'Strengthening marriages and Preventing Divorce: New Directions in Prevention Research', p. 396; H. Anderson 'Marriage Preparation: A Protestant Perspective.' In H. Anderson; D. B. Browning and M. S. van Leeuwen (Eds.) *The Family Handbook* pp. 114- 117.

⁶⁷⁸ Mace, D. R. and Mace, V. C. Marriage Enrichment – Wave of the Future? *The Family Coordinator* Vol. 24, No. 2, April 1975, pp. 131-135.

⁶⁷⁹ Rebecca M. Smith, Sarah M. Shoffner and Jean P. Scott 'Marriage and Family Enrichment: A New Professional Area' *The Family Coordinator* Vol. 28, No. 1, Jan., 1978, pp. 87 – 93.

⁶⁸⁰ Jeffery H. Larson 'Innovations in Marriage Education: Introduction and Challenges' *Family Relations* Vol. 53, No. 5, 2004, pp. 421-424.

8.4.3.1 Marriage Education

There is a strong overlap between the concept of marriage education and marriage enrichment. The latter often incorporates skill-based activities that are rooted in marriage education,⁶⁸¹ while marriage education usually relies on group activities and support common to marriage enrichment. For the purpose of this discussion, marriage education encompasses skill-based group programmes for the prevention and remediation of marital distress. Kim Halford refers to it 'as education for couples in committed relationships, which include couples who are married or planning to marry and couples who cohabit in committed relationships'.⁶⁸² Its primary purpose is to work with couples before a problem becomes too serious and entrenched and focuses on an educational and preventive, rather than a remedial, approach to helping couples. The group forum structured in the form of workshops or marriage education providers to deliver, inculcate or facilitate specific subject of interest to elicit couple's participation, information and better understanding of companionship marriage often adopt seminars.⁶⁸³

Marriage education programmes are less likely to provoke couples' fear of either being stigmatized as dysfunctional or violating their privacy and are less expensive than marital therapy.⁶⁸⁴ Education could foster the willingness by couples to assess further professionalized and intrusive marital resources when necessary. There is modest evidence indicating that marriage and relationship education (MRE) functions both as a universal and as a selective or indicated prevention. That is, MRE demonstrates programme effects at longer-term follow-up for well-functioning

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 421.

⁶⁸² Kim W. Halford 'The Future of Couple Relationship Education: Suggestions on How it can Make a Difference' *Family Relations* Vol. 53, Issue 5, Oct. 2004, pp. 599-566.

⁶⁸³ Mace and Mace, p. 133.

⁶⁸⁴ Larson 'Innovations in Marriage Education: Introduction and Challenges' *Family Relations*, p. 424.

couples and at post-assessment and at shorter terms for more distressed couples.⁶⁸⁵ In essence, marriage education is more of a preventive rather than a curative approach.

7.4.3.2 Couple Retreat

Couple retreat is another relevant marriage-enrichment programme that could be employed to enhance conflict resolution and communication skills, understanding, biblical teachings on marriage, and intimacy among couples. Its distinction is (1) 'its limitation to groups of normal married pairs or normal families (2) an informal (religious) setting, and (3) emphasis on experiential learning.'⁶⁸⁶ This marriage-enhancement approach within the church setting is often organised on a specific weekends and, at other times, at locations where everyday distractions are limited or avoided as much as possible. For example, the NBC has a permanent campsite, Camp Young, Ede, Nigeria, where specific groups meet for retreat, convention or for other special purposes peculiar to the group's needs. It is particularly desirable, in view of the reported outcomes of the couple retreats held at Camp Young Ede,⁶⁸⁷ that diaspora ministers begin to explore the utilization of couple retreats, given its inherent didactic, preventive and therapeutic nature.

The content materials deployed during couple retreats could range from issues on biblical teachings on marriage and family life, such as mutual submission between

⁶⁸⁵ Victoria L. Blanchard, Hawkins, A. J., Baldwin, S. A. and Elizabeth B. Fawcett 'Investigating the Effects of Marriage and Relationship Education on Couples' Communication Skills: A Meta-analytic Study' *Journal of family Psychology* Vol. 23, No. 2, April 2009, pp. 203-214.

⁶⁸⁶ Smith et al

⁶⁸⁷ The official voice of the Women Missionary Union (WMU) of the NBC is replete with several testimonials of how relationships between couples have been specially enriched, saving them from the brink of marriage breakdown and divorce as a result of insights and ministrations during couple retreats at Camp Young Ede. No one should be under any illusion that merely attending Camp Young Ede is a panacea for marital instability; the point is that the atmosphere offered by such holiday setting provided the right frame of mind for couples to become more self-critical and reflective. Please see: *Proclaim*

couples, tolerance, forgiveness, and love, to financial management, conflict resolution, and relationship with families. Although there is no hard and fast rule in terms of content, flexibility is vital so as to determine the specific needs of couples and tailor responses accordingly. Samuel Lee, a Nigerian Baptist marriage-growth and - enrichment specialist, proposed three dimensional categories of love that undergird contemporary marriages: ‘love if’, ‘love because’ and ‘love despite.’ He argues that marital crisis; dissatisfaction and divorce are largely hinged on the fact that the first two categories of love define most marriages.⁶⁸⁸ While Lee’s categorizations of love are helpful in furthering the conditional and unconditional natures of love as they apply to marriage, the third category is more apposite to be incorporated for couple retreats.

The concept of ‘love despite’ is rooted and drawn from the biblical usage of the word ‘love’ in various texts, which, from its Greek etymological context – ‘*agape*’ implies ‘unconditional love’, ‘love without strings attached’ or ‘love despite of’.⁶⁸⁹ This type of love is usually attributed to the Divine Being, God, while ‘love if’ or ‘love because’ pervades human relations. The former is seen as selfless and self-giving, whereas the latter is selfish and self-gratifying, Paul’s injunction in Ephesians 5: 20-26, particularly to the man or husband, strongly underscores the ideals of ‘love despite:’ ‘husbands love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself by dying for her.’⁶⁹⁰ There is little doubt that a number of men will struggle with the demand of ‘love despite (...)’ the attitude of their wives. Albeit considering the

⁶⁸⁸ Marriage and Family life Seminar/Teaching at Pentecost Baptist Church, Liverpool, on the 26th Oct., 2014 by Rev. Samuel Lee, Minister Emeritus, Orita Mefa Baptist Church, Ibadan, Nigeria.

⁶⁸⁹ Walter Trobisch *I married You* Bolivar, Missouri: Quiet Water Publication, 2009, p. 47.

⁶⁹⁰ *Holy Bible* (NIV) Ephesians 5: 25.

context out of which it is made, the availability of God's grace should evaporate the gravity of such demand.

The argument pursued here is that, when couples embrace and imbibe the ideals advocated by unconditional love, conflict and resentment will be minimized: even when they experience tension in their relationship, forgiveness becomes easier because of their consciousness of God's presence in their marriage. Apostle Paul captures this truth in Eph. 5: 33, directed to couples: 'Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband'.⁶⁹¹

8.4.3.3 Couples Communication Programmes (CCP)

In 'preventing marital distress through communication and conflict management training: a 4- and 5- year follow-up' Markman et al. found that Couples with higher levels of positive and lower levels of negative communication skills usually experience lower level of marital violence.⁶⁹² Couples Communication Program is as a structured educational program which aims to teach average couples awareness of the rules they use in interacting and how to increase communication skills by learning to change rules and interaction patterns.⁶⁹³ The clergy along with other resource persons involved in marriage enhancement programmes equally have a veritable pool of resources to draw from by initiating relevant training programmes aimed at inculcating positive communication skills.

⁶⁹¹Eph. 5: 33

⁶⁹² Howard J. Markman; Renick, Mari Jo; Floyd, Frank J.; Stanley Scott M. and Clements, Mari 'Preventing Marital Distress through Communication and Conflict Management Training: A 4- and 5-Year Follow-Up'. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* Vol. 61, No. 1, Feb., 1993, pp. 70 – 77.

⁶⁹³ Miller Sherod; Nunnally, Elam W. and Daniel B. 'A Communication Training Programme for Couples' *Social Casework* Vol. 57, No. 1, Jan., 1976, pp. 9 – 18.

To organize a CCP group meeting, the facilitator could bring together 5-7 couples in an informal setting over 4 weeks of 2 hour sessions for each meeting; lectures are supplemented with discussion and home exercises. The sessions deal with (a) self-awareness and how to express it verbally, (b) the accurate exchange of important information between partners, (c) 4 styles of communication, and (d) building the esteem of the partners for each other. This list of topics is by no means exhaustive; facilitator/instructor should be flexible to adapt content materials to the specific context. The group format enhances active participation as well as feedback from peers and observation of how others relate. Although evaluation should be on going however one could employ the pre- and post-tests of communication behaviour by given 17 couples that received training and 15 controls couple's opportunities to share their personal experiences.

In spite of the lack of evidence-based research on the impact of 'pet name' or 'romantic name' such as 'honey' 'sugar' 'sweet heart' 'babe' 'mine' and others in enhancing effective communication among couples; thereby strengthening marital relationships, nonetheless, an African folklore maintains: '*onyehunkporibieezibguefan a chornijor*'; '*Onukeohuhu gi edozi e kwan*'⁶⁹⁴ meaning 'the one who calls you a lovely name will always be positively disposed to you' and 'the bird uses its beak to arrange its eggs' respectively. The point here is that effective or positive communications developed by the use of appropriate language offers therapeutic benefits for couples. Consequently, marriage enhancement facilitators, relationship

⁶⁹⁴ The sayings: '*onyehunkporezibguefan a chor ni jor*' '*Onukeohuhu gi edozi e kwan* are deeply enshrined traditional customs among the Ika people, found in Delta state, Nigeria. In common with a number of other traditional sayings or parables in relation to conjugal love, the overarching meaning/message strongly project the view that the use of 'sweet/loving words' wins friendship. In other words, it is difficult to be at war with the one that you courts with your word.

therapist and church ministers has a duty to engage couples to build their intimacy by integrating the potential values inherent by using sweet or romantic words.

Any inclination to undermine the value of the various marriage enrichment programmes considered above will not only amount to academic travesty but ministerial insensitivity and impoliteness as well. So, in line with James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, this thesis concurs that efforts/activities in pastoral and practical theology with regards to family harmony are transformative and empowering.⁶⁹⁵ However, in spite of such lofty contributions, the argument pursued in this study is that they are yet irresponsive to the yearnings of Yoruba couples as data and subsequent analysis suggest. Such limitations inadvertently justifies the need for a model that is both conscious of the contributions of therapeutic counselling as well as the invaluableeness of prayer in addressing human mundane experiences. I now turn to my proposed model, Prayer Intervention Programme.

8.4.3.4 Prayer Intervention Programme (PIP)

A. Theoretical Underpinning

Prayer Intervention Programme (PIP) is a novel concept of my own, which draws significantly from my practical experiences both as a Christian minister as well as a prayer exponent. It is an eclectic pastoral counselling approach designed to support, intervene or enhance marital stability among Christian couples. It utilizes specific biblical texts, personal confessions and petitions, along with deliverance ministration as indispensable tools. As a therapeutic-spiritual method, maximizing the outcomes of

⁶⁹⁵ James Woodward and Stephen Pattison 'What are the Outcome of Practical Theological Activities?' James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (eds.) *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2000, p. 10.

PIP is not exclusive to the clergy but open to any practitioner insofar that such individual has appropriated the agency of God's grace through the Christ event.⁶⁹⁶ Drawing on the African worldview in relation to the reality of the spiritual world, Osadolor Imasogie and other key African Scholar's makes the point clear that African's strongly believes in the duality of existence.⁶⁹⁷ Hence for Africans, particularly the Yoruba, every physical occurrence is first and foremost initiated and engineered in the spiritual (unseen but not unreal) world. More so, this ideas finds strong resonant in all the interview responses, the excerpts of respondent 3 and 8 are significant.⁶⁹⁸

In common with the African worldview about the reality and potency of the spiritual realm, the Judeo-Christian world, particularly as typified in the writing of Paul, the Apostle, not only demonstrates considerable affinity but equally exhort Christians to be proactive. These biblical texts are illuminating: John 10:10; 2nd Corinthians 10: 1-7; and Ephesians 6: 10 - 18. Prayer Intervention Programme is framed around the biblical position about the devil as the author (directly or indirectly) of every form of evil and that undoing his works calls for spiritual warfare –prayer; cf. John 10: 1 - 10, Ephesians 6: 10 - 18 & 2nd 10: 1 - 4. 'What then are the weapons of our warfare'?

⁶⁹⁶ The point here is that unlike most marriage enrichment approaches, to be able to utilize PIP, the practitioner should have experienced the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. In order words, this experience is known within the evangelicals as salvation experience of being 'born again'. See Wayne Grudem *Systematic Theology* Nottingham, Inter-Varsity Press, pp. 657 – 840.

⁶⁹⁷ Osadolor Imasogie *African Traditional Religion* Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1985, 37. ; *Guideline for Christian Theology in Africa* Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1986, pp. and Nwoye, Augustine 'Remapping the Fabric of the African-Self: A Synoptic Theory' *Dialectical Anthropology Springer*, 2006, pp. 119 – 146 and John S. Mbiti *African Religions and Philosophy* London: Macmillan Press, 1980, p. 57.

⁶⁹⁸ Respondent 3: '...like I said earlier we are able to sit down and dialogue because we are Christians and know that most of our marriage problems have spiritual roots... but because of what we listen to in the church and the contributions of the pastors, the spiritual leaders have helped us through counselling and lectures we receive.' Respondent 8: 'in some churches they do couples programme and some they do women's programme because some trouble that husband and wives face is always caused by Satan the importance of not allowing the environment to influence their negatively.'

Queried Peter Wagner; in his words, ‘the central foundational activity for spiritual warfare is prayer. In one sense, prayer is a weapon of warfare, and in another sense it is the medium through which all of the other weapons are utilized’.⁶⁹⁹

From the Nigerian Baptist Convention’s theological position, prayer is described as an act of worship, submission, reverence, spiritual warfare and expressing our petitions to God, our heavenly father.⁷⁰⁰ Prayer is seen as vitally important to the extent that one’s ‘prayer life’ is used to evaluate the level of intimacy or relationship with God. Francis Wale Oke notes: ‘Every Christian need to learn, practise and master how to stay with God and talk over with Him issues that affect his or her life, and those of others, talking over them personally, realistically and thoroughly. God has time to listen to us if we have time to stay with Him in prayer’.⁷⁰¹

The centrality of prayer to Prayer Intervention Programme is captured by the above views as espoused by Oke. Indeed, it can be described as the essence and live wire which elicit divine intervention to effect the eternal purpose of God for marriage; marital harmony. The notion of spiritual warfare⁷⁰² only finds meaning and expression through the act of prayer; where through worship, reverence, confession and profession of God’s word, the believer appropriates the benefits grace including salvation, victory, healing, deliverance and prosperity.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁹ C. Peter Wagner ‘Spiritual Warfare’ *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* California: Gospel Light Publication, 1999, p. 7.

⁷⁰⁰ *Nigerian Baptist Convention Statement of Faith and Practice* Ibadan: Baptist Press Ltd., 2004; William H. Brackney *The A – Z of Baptist* Scarecrow: Plymouth, 2009.

⁷⁰¹ Francis Wale Oke *Alone with God: Bringing a Prayer Revolution into your Life* London: His Kingdom House Publishers, p. 13, 2012.

⁷⁰² As earlier pointed out, the religious background of all the respondents is typified by the idea that the spiritual real has a dialectical interplay with the physical hence for them prayer is seen as a form of spiritual warfare.

⁷⁰³ D. K. Olukoya 101 *Weapons of Spiritual Warfare* Lagos: The Battle Cry Christian Ministries 2013, p. 31 – 51.

B. The Praxis of Prayer Intervention Programme

It is crucially important to keep in focus that a major overriding thesis in this research is that the problem under investigation (marital instability) confronts a particular people group that does not only take pride in their Christian identity but commitment as well. So, such strong religious commitment and background justifies the need for approaches that does not only rely on scientific or academic theories but also spiritually rooted in the Bible. Against this background, the relevance of PIP as a viable approach to help strengthen marriages and offer seminal contribution is significant.

To the Nigerian Baptist Convention members, one cannot be a successful Christian without a vibrant prayer habit. Writing in this wise, Supo Ayokunle contends: ‘prayer is the master key that can be applied to every form of human predicament be they social, economic, political, spiritual or relational, its impact cut across every sphere of life.’⁷⁰⁴ Again, prayer seemed habitual in the Old Testament; for example, right from the time of the patriarchs in Genesis down to Moses and the prophets, the same can equally be argued to prevalent in the New Testament as typified by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Ayokunle’s proposition is right because the evolution and instances where prayer was used as a means to address human predicaments are satiated in the Judio-Christian tradition and scriptures, the following passages further illustrate the pivotal role of prayer; Genesis 18: 17 – 23; 32: 22 - 26; 1st Samuel 1: 9 - 18; Matthew 22: 40 - 44. Following the implications of these texts; that God answers the fervent prayer of his children, variations of prayer intervention programmes for couples have

⁷⁰⁴ Supo Ayokunle, Presidential address to the 56th General Session of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, held at Ibadan, Nigeria from April 16th - 19th 2014.

been designed, they include: personal prayer session, prayer and fasting session, night or vigil prayer session and couples group prayer session.

The different sessions are to be led by the minister (practitioner) or prayer intervention facilitator, who herself is driven by the conviction that ‘there is no problem that can defy the prayer of faith’.⁷⁰⁵ In common with other marriage enhancement strategies as identified above, the prayer intervention approach shares the notion of flexibility in terms of frequency and duration of the period needed for each couple. As a means of evaluation, the freedom and willingness for couples to voluntarily engage each other in praying together is crucial because as Trobisch argues, the couple that prays together stays and triumph together.⁷⁰⁶ However, there is a limit that issues of faith or spirituality lends itself to objective scrutiny or observation, hence prayer intervention programmes, as an exercise that is based on faith, cannot solely be evaluated or validated by empirical methods. Thus, this uniqueness of PIP inadvertently can be argued as a potential limitation, which largely opens the need for further research.

It is imperative to delimit PIP given the on-going ministerial conversation with colleagues, yet its distinguishing uniqueness lay on the stress that is placed on prayer. In a sense, the composition of PIP and the desired outcome can be compared to the theological notion of trinity: the minister (practitioner), couple and God, who is the centri-Peter force. The three must be present and actively involved in order for the sessions to be successful. This idea categorically sets Prayer Intervention Programme distinct from others. Although applying knowledge preventively, promises to be more

⁷⁰⁵ Francis Wale Oke, p. 15.

⁷⁰⁶ Walter Trobisch, p. 62.

effective, and thus needs to be more widely understood and imbibed by the clergy as well as other marriage and family resource persons, yet, it is right to note that as service providers, whether from the spiritual, social or psychological perspectives, we are limited. Discussion of some of the limitations is set out in the next session.

8.5 The Limitations of Pastoral Response

The extent of pastoral contributions to marriage enhancement and flowering, in common with other resource persons involved in family life education, clinical-based therapist or social workers is limited in terms of outcomes, scope, methodology which are summative in nature.⁷⁰⁷ In admitting the limitation of couple's therapy research suggest that 'in general only about two thirds of couples report improvements in their marital satisfaction as a result of therapy',⁷⁰⁸ and 'a substantial number of couples who successfully complete marital therapy do not attain the level of satisfaction reported by non-distressed couples',⁷⁰⁹ again, 'relapse after therapy is often common'.⁷¹⁰

8.6 Conclusion

This final chapter discussed the pastoral implications of the data, critiqued the pastoral responses offered by the NBC, and proposed potential ways forward. It notes that although a range of pastoral resources are available to support couples undergoing marital instabilities yet no one should be under any illusion; marriage

⁷⁰⁷ Arcus M. E. and Thomas J. 'The Nature and Practice of Family Life Education in M. E. Arcus, J. Schvandeveltdt and J. J. Moss (eds.), *Handbook of Family Life Education* Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993, pp. 1 – 15;

⁷⁰⁸ Johnson, p.7

⁷⁰⁹ Jacobson, p.8

⁷¹⁰ David Mace 'Three Ways of Helping Married Couples' *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* Vol. 13, Issue 2, April 1987, pp. 179 - 185.

relations cannot be immune from existential challenges and crisis. It however argues that in view of the potentials inherent in competence building programs as well as the negative implications of marital distress, there is the need for continuous couple education along with marriage enrichment programmes in spite of the hermeneutical underpinnings, NBC denominational position or pastoral limitations. The typical goals of the various marriage approaches as examined indicated that: easing the transition from single to married life, increasing couples stability and satisfaction for the short and long term, enhancing the communication skills of the couple, increasing friendship and commitment to the relationship, increasing couples intimacy, enhancing problem solving and decision making skills in such areas as marital roles and finances are significant aims that every marriage enhancing programme should pursue.

As already noted, marriage in the contemporary time, has changed from 'a one-vote to a two-vote system' i.e. partnership of man and woman as opposed to sole proprietorship of the man. This of course, offers a better relationship, however it is more difficult to manage, and, consequently, there are many failures. The chapter identifies various approaches/solutions that are currently being offered: (a) marriage relationship education; as information-giving, (b) marriage counselling and family therapy alongside other forms of psychological support and (C) marriage enrichment programmes. Their invaluable nature are significantly supported by research but that marital instabilities, breakdown and divorce are still confronting many marriages in the present dispensation calls for the Christian eschatological understanding; which among others sees the ultimate solution to human needs as a product of a partnership between God and human beings. Hence the justification, as argued above, for a fifth approach known as prayer intervention approach.

The chapter thus argues that any meaningful pastoral responses to marital instability should be tailored to reflect the above aims, because in the long term, effort to strengthen marriage will not only benefit couples but family and society at large. There were some specific findings in this study that may offer future research trajectory as it relates to spousal power relations and marriage enhancement: premarital and couple education tends to reduce the preponderance of marital instability.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

The study offered an in-depth examination of marital instability among Yoruba Christian couples living in the North West of England. It analysed the effects of their migratory experiences on spousal relations. The study drew mainly on the experiences of Yoruba couples in the NWE, but it also utilized contributions from the wider diaspora and directed attention to the socio-cultural imperatives as a constituent in understanding marital instability and conflicts among this population. In addition, the proposition that lack of equality between men and women has been the most important factor in the miseries of married life was given significant attention in relation to the research population. The study also argued that the contact of the Yoruba Christian couples with the social realities in the NWE often presents serious marital challenges and crises.

The use of a qualitative approach in this study enabled the researcher to have evidence-based and first-hand in-depth understanding of Yoruba couples' marital experiences. Although no single research method is adequate to fully study a phenomenon, the qualitative paradigm facilitated a substantial understanding of contemporary social realities, with particular reference to spousal power relations. It also drew attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features. In other words, qualitative procedures provided a means of accessing the unquantifiable experiences about the Yoruba couples investigated. In spite of the inherent limitations of the qualitative approach as well as the insider/outsider constraints, conscious

sensitivity, reflexivity and intellectual rigour were adopted to navigate personal biases and other difficulties in the course of the research.

The following are the key findings of the study: (1) Intercultural contacts between Yoruba Christian couples with the matriarchal social realities and structures in the North West of England raise significant marital tensions. (2) The gender role reversal experienced by Yoruba men in the NWE tends to diminish their dominance and identity, and this threatens spousal harmony and relations. (3) There is a strong correlation between Yoruba women economic empowerment in the NWE and their ability to renegotiate power in the family; in other words, power outside the family produces a sense of power inside the family. (4) Despite the debilitating effects of hierarchy, it continues to serve as a strong cord for social cohesion among Yoruba couples. Its absence in the NWE engenders unstable interpersonal relations, particularly with regard to marriage. This study argued that an egalitarian pattern of power is associated with greater marital satisfaction than hierarchical patterns of husband or wife dominance. All these suggest that the diasporic life is disruptive to Yoruba Christian couples.

The relevance of the proposed marriage enhancement initiative, Prayer Intervention Programme (PIP), is significant. This model is rooted in the pastoral counselling tradition, where the counsellor (minister, in this case) is seen as the divine agent to facilitate healing, reconciliation and growth. In addition, while drawing from his practical experiences as a Christian, minister and prayer exponent, the researcher argued that PIP utilizes specific biblical texts, personal confessions and petitions, along with deliverance prayer to assist couples undergoing marital difficulties.

Finally, marriage, as a lived human experience, will always present new and complex challenges that reflect the existential journey of those involved irrespective of their location, social status or cultural and religious backgrounds. The dynamic nature of marriage calls for a continuous reappraisal of the extant marriage-enrichment programmes. For example, my initial positions were often challenged, questioned and realigned by emerging data and literature; to the point that the views espoused presently here will be termed un-African by Yoruba audience. Therefore, the study identified two closely related areas of future research: the renegotiation of family or spousal power relations and means to facilitate spousal harmony among diaspora Christian couples.

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Appendix 1

RESEARCH ETHICS CONSENT FORM

A Critical Analysis of Marital Instability among Yoruba Christians in the North

West of England

Please Initial Box

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | I agree to take part in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being video recorded | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 2: Table of Participants

No	Gender	Time in Marriage	Sub- Cultural Unit	Social Status/ Occupation	Denomination	Date Of Interview
1	M	10	Ondo	Teacher	Baptist	22/01/12
2	M	12	Ibadan	Care Assistant	Baptist	22/01/12
3	M	17	Oyo	Security	C.A.C	24/01/12
4	F	15	Abeokuta	Nurse	Anglican	24/01/12
5	F	10	Idanre	Nurse	Catholic	24/01/12
6	M	13	Abeokuta	Care Assistant	Redeemed	03/02/12
7	M	10	Ogbomosho	Security	Redeemed	03/02/12
8	M	14	Ijebu Mushin	Doctor	Redeemed	04/02/12
9	F	12	Ondo	Care	Baptist	05/02/12

				Assistant Christianity/ Catholic		
10	F	13	Oyo	Nurse	Baptist	06/02/12
11	F	18	Ogbomosho	Nurse	Baptist	08/02/12
12	F	10	Ogbomosho	Teacher	Baptist	08/02/12
13	M	19	Ife	Security	C.A.C	09/02/12
14	M	22	Ife	Security	Christianity/ C.A.C	09/02/12
15	M	18	Idanre	Support Worker	Redeemed	10/02/12
16	M	12	Abeokuta	Teacher	Christianity/ Baptist	11/02/12
17	M	13	Idanre	Security	Baptist	01/03/12
18	F	18	Oyo	Nurse	Baptist	05/03/12
19	F	13	Ibadan	Nurse	Redeemed	05/03/12
20	F	15	Ibadan	Solicitor	Baptist	01/04/12

21	M	18	Akure	Care Assistant	Baptist	02/04/12
22	M	23	Abeokuta	Security	Baptist	04/04/12
23	M	15	Ijebu Ode	Security	Baptist	04/04/12
24	F	18	Ogbomosho	Nurse	Baptist	05/04/12
25	F	10	Oshogbo	Nurse	Baptist	05/04/12
26	F	17	Ila	Care Assistant	Catholic	06/04/12
27	F	14	Ilesha	Doctor	Anglican	07/04/12
28	M	19	Ado-Ekiti	Lecturer	Anglican	12/04/12
29	M	12	Ijebu-Remo	Security	Baptist	12/04/12
30	F	10	Owo	Nurse	Baptist	15/04/12

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

- What is your understanding of marriage as a Yoruba Christian?
- How would you compare your married life in the UK to that in Nigeria?
- How do you make decisions in your home in Nigeria compared to the UK?
- What are the challenges and opportunities as a married person in the UK?
- What do you think are the causes of marital problems among Yoruba couples in the UK?
- How do these issues and challenges affect your marital relationship?
- Could you give some examples of strategies you use to address these marital challenges? How would you have addressed these challenges if you were in Nigeria?
- What role does your Church's teaching on marriage play in the face of these challenges?
- In your opinion, what recommendations do you have to strengthen Yoruba marital relationships in the NWE?
- Finally, are there other issues you like to say that have not been raised in the course of this interview?

NIGERIA

Neighboring countries: NIGER, CHAD, CAMEROON, BENIN.

States and Territories shown:

- North:** Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno.
- North-West:** Kebbi, Zamfara, Kaduna.
- North-East:** Gombe, Bauchi, Plateau, Adamawa.
- Central:** Niger, Kwara, Ilorin, Oyo, Ekiti, Osun, Ondo, Edo, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia, Imo, Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom.
- South:** Lagos, Ogun, Ojo, Ibadan, Oshogbo, Akure, Benin City, Warri, Port Harcourt, Brass, Foniweitoro.
- South-East:** Taraba, Jalingo, Gombe, Bauchi, Plateau, Benue, Makurdi, Gboko, Oyoja, Uyo, Calabar.

Major cities marked include: Abuja (Federal Capital), Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, Minna, Jos, Ibadan, Lagos, Port Harcourt, and many others.

Gulf of Guinea



Appendix 5
Sample of Ekun Iyawo

E ku kike ti e ke mi
E kugige ti e ge mi
Emi Adunni ti mo de be mo buboju
Mo jojo mo jodojude oko
Oko fi naira kanlemi ni waju
Mo jojo mo jodojudeale
Ale fi ponun Kan leminiwaju
E ba n kokopokuorire
E si ba n kale pokuasedanu

Meaning:

Thanks for the pampering as you pampered me
And thanks for the honour as you honoured me
I, Adunni got there and splashed my face
I danced till I got to my husband's frontage
My husband patted my head with a Naira note
My concubine patted my head with a pond of Naira
Convey my glad tidings to my kind husband
Relay my pitful message to the wasted concubine

Oju mi wadoju oge
Idi mi wadidii leke
Ileke ti e ba ka ti ko ba pe

Gbogbo aye e ma a tu mi laso lo

Sugbon e maa tuto bi mi

Ohun ti mo mu wayen bela be aso

Meaning:

My countenance radiates elegantly

My waist becomes adorned with beads

The beads you count but become incomplete

The world should render me naked

But spare me my inner-skirt

My birth-price is hidden beneath.⁷¹¹

⁷¹¹ For further explication, see Olalere Waheed Raji, A Stylistic Analysis of Ekun Iyawo, Research on Humanities and Social Sciences www.iiste.org, Vol.3, No.9, 2013

Appendix 6

Format of a Yoruba Traditional Wedding observed by Philip Oyewale at Ibadan in March 2012.

Introduction

The event was moderated by two narrators representing both families, the ‘Alaga Ijoko’ (the sitting MC) for the bride’s family and the ‘Alaga Iduro’ (the standing MC) for the grooms family accompanied with traditional drummers. The bride’s family were the host, which is in line with Yoruba traditional wedding norm. There were also two tents for the event, one for the bride’s family and the other for the groom’s family.

1. Arrival of Groom’s family.

The arrival of the groom’s family signalled the start of the ceremony. They were led inside the bride’s tent by their Alaga Iduro (the standing MC). Once inside, they were introduced by their Alaga and proceeded to kneel and greet the bride’s family.

2. The Proposal and Acceptance

The Alaga Iduro (the standing MC) then presented an elaborate proposal letter; (“the letter”) on behalf of the groom’s family. A young lady from the bride’s family was called to read out the proposal letter. The bride’s family responded by given an acceptance letter, which was equally read out, to the audience.

3. Arrival of the Groom

The Alaga Iduro (the standing MC) then proceeded to usher in the groom. The groom made his appearance by dancing in with his friends and then proceeds to prostrate two times with his friends and once alone to his new in-laws. During the third prostration, both families stretched out their arms and prayed for the groom. He then prostrated once with his friends for his own family before proceeding to take his seat.

4. Arrival of the Bride

Immediately after the groom took his seat, the bride appeared veiled with dancing and was escorted by her friends. She knelt in front of her parents for their prayers and blessings, and then does the same with her future husband's parents. Her husband unveiled her and she also put the groom's hat (fila) on his head, this demonstrates her acceptance of the proposal.

5. Presentation of Ring

From the list of gifts brought by the groom's family, the wife was required to pick her favourite. She picked the Bible and attached to the Bible was her engagement ring. The groom took the ring and inserted it on the bride's left finger. She then danced happily as she shows off her ring to the world.

6. Bride Price

Various envelopes containing everything from the bride price to money for the wives, children and elders in her family are handed over to the bride's family. The bride's family returned the envelope containing the bride price to the groom's family, this is done with the belief that both families have become one and they are not selling their daughter.

7. Cutting of the Cake

The couple were then called to cut the engagement cake also known as 'Akara Oyinbo.' This serves as a symbol of happiness due to its rich and sweet ingredients.

8. Party Time

Final prayers are said and the occasion is ended with lots of love, eating, music and dancing.

Engagement List Brought by the Groom's Family (varies slightly from family to family and Yoruba state to state)

42 Big Tubers of Yam

42 Big Cola Nuts

42 Big Bitter Cola (Orogbo)

42 Pieces of Dry Fish

42 Pieces of Alligator Pepper (Ata're)

2 Bottles of Honey

2 Pairs of Shoes and Bags

2 Scarves

1 Wrist Watch

1 Bible

1 Engagement Ring

1 Big Suitcase

1 Traditional Aso-Oke

1 Big Dish of 'Aadun'

1 Bag of salt

1 Bag of Sugar

1 Umbrella

Envelopes containing bride price, or bridal wealth and money for bride's family.